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St. Christopher, and other poems.



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ST. CHRISTOPHER

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

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AND JOINT AUTHOR OF 'THE LIFE OF CHRISTOPHER
WORDSWORTH, BISHOP OF LINCOLN'

LONDON

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PREFACE

A VERY FEW WORDS will suffice as introduction to a volume like the present. The story of St. Christopher, which has always had a special attraction for the writer, not merely on its own account, but for family and personal reasons, will be found here, but very slightly altered, although accompanied by a kind of musical interlude, in which images drawn from the uses and functions of water in the natural world lead up to a higher spiritual interpretation. It is surely not impossible that the position frequently occupied by figures of St. Christopher near the church door, a place where the font is usually found, may be due to some more or less conscious association of his story with the thought of Holy Baptism, the time in the life of a Christian when the servitude of Evil is forsworn, and the sovereignty of Christ is acknowledged.

The 'King's Father' is an attempt to reproduce

in a dramatic form the very interesting sketch of M. Emmanuel De Broglie, 'Le Fils de Louis Quinze,' which reminds us that even in an age and court proverbially corrupt there was at least one untainted household, and one lofty and unworldly nature. The very inaction to which the Dauphin was condemned, while it moves our deepest sympathy, unfortunately makes his history somewhat unsuitable for dramatic purposes ; the tragedy of his life consisted chiefly in the fact that there *was* no *dénouement*, no climax to be worked up to.¹ Yet it is perhaps well for us to preserve, so far as in us lies, the memory of a character which under more favourable circumstances might have had a bright light shed on it by the poet or the historian ; a man of whom even the cynical Horace Walpole said that his death was the greatest loss which had befallen France since that of Henri IV.

It is hardly necessary to apologise for some liberties taken with the subject, such as e.g. the undue prominence given to Madame Louise, to the exclusion of her sisters, which was almost necessary for dramatic purposes ; the all but ignoring of the great Jesuit struggle ; the making the date of the camp at Compiègne coincide with that of the death of Madame de Pompadour, and the substitution of the Duc de Bourgogne, whose early death had (1761) darkened the last years of the Dauphin, for his brother the future Louis XVI. in the closing scenes ; and many

¹ ' Il mourut dévoré par le sentiment de son inutilité ' (*De Broglie*).

other weak points which those conversant with the period will at once detect. The object has been not to load the pages with details, but to create interest in one or two important characters, and to bring out the old but never hackneyed moral, that not what a man does, but what he is, should be the criterion by which he must be judged. It is interesting to know that the Dauphin's remains were preserved intact during the Revolution, and that France has not profaned the ashes of one of whom even Madame de Pompadour was forced to say, 'Le Dauphin a le cœur bon ; c'est peut-être le seul héritier qui verserait des larmes à la mort de son père.' His devoted counsellor Du Muy, who had carried out the Dauphin's dying request, that he would be good to his children, by accepting office under Louis XVI., was buried at his old friend's feet in the Cathedral of Sens, with the inscription on his tomb, *Hucusque luctus meus.*

OXFORD : Nov. 17, 1890.



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ST. CHRISTOPHER

Cantata

Christopheri Sancti speciem quicumque tuetur
Illo sane die nullo dolore gravetur

Old mural inscription in a Wiltshire Church

ST. CHRISTOPHER

A CANTATA

SCENE I.—*A rocky Hermitage by the side of a ravine.*

The HERMIT walking on the crags.

Time, early morning.

Hermit. Once more, O sun! I watch thee grandly
 rising,
As Christ arose, when all the world was still;
Thou blood-red fount of Love, the world baptising,
That spreadst in rosy light from hill to hill!
The fir-tree tops rejoice, the woods awaken;
Swift flies the gloom, by thy keen rays o'ertaken.

Still deep and dark yon hollow chasm abideth,
Where, black and pent with cliffs, th' imprisoned
 stream .

Bellows and frets and foams, and hoarsely chideth;
Rough rocks beneath, above it smothering steam.
O soul of man! 'twixt ignorance and sorrow
Thus runs thy course—long night, as yet no morrow!

Such have I known erewhile; the struggling many,
Whose life, uncheered by sunshine, darkly ran
In fruitless strife, nor comfort had it any,
Nor hope in God, nor tenderness for man.
O Lord! have pity; *they* know not, *Thou* knowest;
Touch with Thy love even these, Thy last and lowest!

See, yonder see, the rifted crags receding !

Those waves, set free, in broader currents run ;
And now, ah now !—O moment worth the heeding !—

Their crests are golden, they have felt the sun.
The glory spreads : of late in darkness pining,
The stream laughs back to heaven—gives sheen for
shining ;

And redder still those ruby clouds are burning,

And wider, wider spread those shafts of gold ;
Hill after hill is touched, all nature yearning

For this new blessing, which can ne'er grow old.
O flowers ! O birds ! and everything that moveth,
I love you all in Him, because He loveth.

[Turns, and sees two figures wrestling in the distance.

Black in the full-orbed glory of the sun,

Oh, who are these afar, that hither press ?

Not friendly, as two pilgrims side by side .

In amicable converse ; nay, their shapes

Are wrestling, intertwined in fiercest throes

Of deadly combat, knee fast locked in knee :

One gripes the throat ; now grappling, breast to
breast,

Forward they come, gigantically matched,

Two rocky masses on each other flung

By earthquake's might, two clouds that burst in rain,

With flash and rolling thunder ; or as at sea

Two towering ships, storm-driven, that crash on crash

Confound each other in one general wreck,

Spars flying, shouts of woe, and curses dire !

O Heaven ! I see them nearer ! God above,

What fiendish shape is this ? From the mouth of
hell

That voice, those gestures came ! His face is dark,

O'erbrooding wings of blackness veil his form,
That, nearer drawing, with fierce, scorching glow,
Sucks, like a furnace blast, the dewy air.

[*Figures approach nearer.*

1st Voice. Thou canst not fly me !

2nd Voice. I defy thee. Hence !

1st Voice. Thou'rt mine ! I challenge Heaven and
Earth to wrest

Thee, body or soul, from me.

2nd Voice. I will not yield ;

I hate thee, scorn thee, and forswear thee !

1st Voice. Yield !

What shall resistance bring thee, trampled worm,
But pain, pain, pain, and threefold thousand pains,
From me, thy lord and master, in that world
Wherein I reign ?

2nd Voice (*Peregrinus*). Thou canst not wrest my
will.

I will not yield. Have at thee once again !
Bruise me, and scorch me, mar my face with blows,
Break all my bones, the shapeless mass deformed
Thou tramplest on the earth, from every wound
Shall cry, ' I hate thee ! ' ere my stiffening lips
Shall say one word of yielding.

1st Voice. Then with this

I'll crush thee to the earth. [*They wrestle.*

Hermit [approaching]. Nearer and nearer, fiercer
sounds the fray.

O thou dark spirit ! in the name of Him
Who wrestled with thee on the cross for man,
By this same cross, by that victorious might,
I charge thee, hence !

1st Voice. Thou foil'st me now, mean slave
Of pious usage, hypocritic form,

Lax coward, fingering beads and pattering prayer ;
 But when the moonless midnight hour is come,
 And all is dark in thy storm-circled cell,
 And winds put out the taper's petty life
 Before thy cherished image, and with moans
 And twitching faces, sudden flash of eyes,
 And—threatening now, now musically bland,
 Now laughing, now blaspheming—airy tongues
 Mix with the petulant chiding of the gale
 And cries of shipwrecked men, *my* prey ; why, then
 Think on this hour, and thou wilt curse the day
 Thou durst step in betwixt my own and me !

Hermit. Hence, in His name !

[*Thunder. First speaker disappears. Hermit
 alone with Peregrinus, who has sunk ex-
 hausted on the ground.*

A giant mass of manhood, yet he lies
 Utterly spent, like some scarce-breathing corse,
 With streaming gashes, singed and clotted hair,
 And ashy lips, and all his mighty limbs
 In tattered garments, foul with dust and sweat,
 Felled to the ground, like some tall tree, whose arms
 Once fellows with the sky, now trailed in mire,
 With fresh green foliage drooping, soiled and torn,
 Bewail the woodman's axe. I'll lend him aid.
 See, take my hand !

Peregrinus [*half springing up, and flinging out his
 arms*]. Hence ! wouldst thou yet again
 Try masteries with me—— ? Oh, forgive, forgive !
 Or art thou he, my wary foe, disguised
 Beneath the garb of sanctity and age ?

Hermit. Nay, yonder see the charred and withered
 grass,
 The track his burning footsteps left—and there,

A band of noiseless listeners, glitter forth
 To hear the tale, your labours and your life,
 How you have toiled and struggled, how endured,
 You shall recount at leisure.

Peregrinus. I obey.
 My will is spent. I follow. Lead the way.

SCENE II.—*The Cell at evening.*

PEREGRINUS and the HERMIT, seated.

Hermit. Thou wilt not stay beyond to-morrow's
 dawn?

There's many a traveller tarries at my cell
 For food or drink or shelter, and their words
 Are kind and grateful ever, yet to none
 Have I felt moved, like thee.

Peregrinus. I may not stay.
 I thank thee, but this life is not for me.
 There is a passionate movement in my blood
 That longs for doing, and my frame, if here
 I tarried listlessly, full soon would tire
 For lack of being tired. Those short-winged birds
 That flutter down for crumbs and fragments, sit
 Pecking with delicate beak at hips and haws,
 Or trailing, many-coloured brambles' fruit—
 Sparrow to sparrow twittering, finch to finch,
 —'Tis well for them; but bid yon sea-gull stop
 From his wild life where all the heaven's his own,
 And all the unapproachèd rocky steeps,
 And all the sea, wide-glittering—bid *him* come
 Feed at your table, fatten him on worms,
 Catch hillside trout to set before him—say,

Henceforth I'll tend thee, wherefore wouldst thou fly ?'

How would he answer thee ? A sea-mew's wing
Must needs fly far, and battle with the storm ;
To such, a listless life is worse than death,
And so 'twould be with me.

Hermit. Yet thou *hast* lived——

Peregrinus. Yes, I have lived. Wouldst hear how
I have lived ?

'Twere a strange story for a winter night.

Hermit. Ay, marry, if thy story match thyself,
'Tis something that o'ertops the common life
And common ways of mortals.

Peregrinus. From a child

'Twas still the same ; within myself I felt
The growing promise of unconquered strength ;
A boy, I played with men ; to manhood grown,
Unmatched by men, I turned to fight with beasts.
Was never horse so skittish and untamed,
But when he felt my hand upon his mane
Grew straightway docile to my whispering voice ;
Was never bloodhound fierce, but fawned on me,
Wagged tail and crouched and whined like beaten
cur ;

Ay, the wild lions and the white-toothed pards,
Did I but lift my finger, skulked away
Like cats that fear the rod—nay more, they feared
My cast-off mantle and my pine-tree staff
While I lay, slumber-bound.

Hermit. And yet, 'tis strange,

Thou bear'st such kindly manhood in thy looks,
Sleeping or waking I could never fear thee.
For all thou hast, thou strongly hast, and sure
Thy heart is strong to love.

Peregrinus. Of that I know not.
Love is a word for minstrels and for maids.
But wouldst hear more? I wearied for my match ;
All strength lay prostrate at my feet. I scorned
To fight and merely conquer. Who would break
A reed, a grass-blade, or a brittle straw?
To snap an oak tree 's worth the pains ! I went
From land to land, still seeking for my match.
They brought me out their strongest champions ; this
Had slain his thousands—his ten thousands, he ;
But when I barely touched them, they grew weak,
Forgot their manhood, and for mercy cried
Ere I had warmed to work. At length there came
Great news of one unconquerable lord,
Stronger than all.

Hermit. His name ?

Peregrinus. Thou wouldst not hear it.
He hath a many names, and every one
Stings like a curse and blisters each man's tongue
Who speaks it.

Hermit. What ! and thou didst yield to him ?
Him—— ?

Peregrinus. Ay, and he paid me richly for my
pains.
Would I have gold ? He showed o' darksome nights
The shrunken, helpless miser, with his hoard,
Would I have beauty ? Fairest womanhood,
Decked for the market all in pearls and smiles,
My gold would buy. Would I have pleasure ? There
Were tables spread, all mine. I gave my strength,
And did him lusty service many a year ;
He gave me all beside. I fought his wars,
I slew his foes, pale drivellers at their books,
Bold, eager-eyed enthusiasts, who stood forth

To preach rebellion 'gainst his frustrate law,
And holy busybodies, prating still
Of charity and faith, their petty alms
Not worth my picking up. I tell thee, friend,
I wearied of it. Then to harder tasks
He set me, and with sterner face he chode
For slightest mandate left undone.

Hermit. Thou tellest
An old, old tale, the prodigal's, who erst
Devoured his portion, then would feed on husks,
And no man gave them..

Peregrinus. Of that tale I know not ;
But this I know, one day he bade me hale
Before Jove's altar, where expectant eyes,
Strained necks, and pushing elbows scarce left room
For her and me, Marcella, whose fair brows,
Curled round with childish ringlets, white in gold,
Held womanhood within, how delicate,
Yet shaming manhood ! There upright she stood,
Now flushed, now pale, the soft small fingers twined,
Downcast of eye ; yet all the potencies
Terrestrial or infernal ne'er could move
The tender finger-tips of that white hand
To fling one grain of incense on the flame,
Nor from that infantine and rosy mouth
Force forth the words of worship that would save
The mother of her children yet unborn,
The wife of him who never yet had wooed,
From dying ere the crescent of her life
Had orb'd to fullest glory.

Hermit. What ails thee now?
Thy face is changed with sudden, twitching pain.

Peregrinus. They tortured her—I saw it, I was there—

Hermit. Not wearied, but the thought of that pure
life

Has left a strange vibration in my heart.
As at the ceasing of some rhythmic chime
The rocking melancholy music floats,
Dead to the ear, but living to the brain,
Reverberating with a nameless thrill,
Where sense with memory dances hand in hand,
Even thus it comes before me !

Peregrinus. But to me——!

I cannot speak of it or her. This only
Would I now ask thee. Know'st thou Him she spake
of?

That Lord, that Strong One, that Omnipotent,
Who in a maiden's heart such fortitude
Inspired, Who steeled that slight and tender frame
To bear what never man had borne, to smile
When every tense and cracking sinew seemed
But like the chords of some clear-ringing lyre,
Whence heavenliest music tremblingly uprose—
To whom?

Hermit. I know Him.

Peregrinus. I would know Him. Say,
How can I find Him ?

Hermit. Thou must fast and pray,
And haply He will show Himself to thee.
He sits upon no earthly throne, the winds
His chariots, and the swift thought-wingèd clouds
His coursers, and the starry hosts of night
His armies, and the empyreal world His seat ;
So vast, the heaven of heavens cannot contain,
And yet He walks in brotherhood with men,
And dwells within the heart, no cruel Lord,
But tenderest, wisest Friend.

Peregrinus. Would He were mine !

Hermit. All things are possible to fast and prayer.

Peregrinus. Thou bidd'st me fast. What ! starve
my giant strength,

Relax the swing of this tremendous arm,
Slacken my sinews, bid these brawny cords,
Flaccid and limp and profitless, shrink back
From challenge, once contemptuously returned ?
What ! should *I* fast, whom Hunger unappeased
Haunts with an everlasting cry for meat ?
Who largely gives takes largely, no thin blood
Runs in my veins, nor on thin viands fed
Can strength like this subsist. Forgive me, friend ;
Strength to the strong, no fasting fare for me !
Thou smilest. I am answered.

Hermit. If to fast

Thou canst not or thou wilt not bring thee, then
At least I bid thee pray.

Peregrinus. I ne'er have prayed,
Nor know I how to pray. Once on my knees
I tried to bend my thoughts to God, when straight
A herd of wild gazelles dashed past me—swift
I followed ; all my prayer had fled away ;
Swifter than they my lightning arrow sped.
One palpitating victim left behind
Of all the herd was mine—a feast before me !
I ate and drank, was satisfied and slept.
And thus 'tis ever when I seek to pray.
I cannot pray, my nature loves it not ;
And He who made my nature what it is,
Sure ne'er can blame the nature He has made.
Thou smil'st not. Art thou answered ?

Hermit.

If to pray

Thou find'st thus irksome—though methinks the soul

Has thews and sinews like the body's self,
Which, being unexercised, do waste and pine,
And prayer is such gymnastic, wholesome, stern,
By none at first congenial found, yet after
Easy, delightful, ay, and profitable
To such as use it—if thou wilt not pray,
Then by yon steep and rocky stair descend,
And seek the deep and dangerous ford beneath.
There oft in spring-time, swollen by mountain snows,
The torrent rages, chin and shoulder deep ;
And he who wades across it, dizzy grown
Amid the dancing whirlpools, totters first,
Then falls, and by the mighty current borne,
In vain may shriek for succour, and in vain
Wave desperate hands, ere dashed on rocks unseen
He sinks, no more to rise alive. But thou,
Tall as a tower, with firm wide-stepping stride,
What were the torrent to thee, but a brook
Wherein a mother sees her child at play
Without a fear? And on thy shoulders borne,
Locked in the custody of those strong arms,
What traveller, ay what woman, ay what child,
Would henceforth fear to pass it?

Peregrinus.

Thou speakest truth.

Such labour suits me well ; to-morrow morn
I'll leave thee, hospitable friend, and seek
The deep ravine, the foaming mountain ford ;
And thou'lt forgive me for the fast and prayer?

[*Exeunt.*

THE WATER-SPIRITS

INTERLUDE (*for music*).*Song of Ice-Spirits.*

Cold, inexorable, still
Sit we on our crystal hill ;
While the alpine winds that freeze
Whistle round our snow-capt brows,
In our rigid grasp the keys
Of that silent prison-house
Where our captives lie congealed,
Locked with bolts that may not yield.

Sunlight, moonlight come in vain
To disturb our sullen reign ;
Still we sit like statues grim,
Smileless, tearless, and apart,
Fixed of visage, stern of limb,
Like an unrepentant heart,
Bleaker than the granite stone,
Where the raven makes his throne.

Might that reigns, but cannot bless,
Death in everlastingness !
Being, without power to move,
Strength that serves but to defy,
Constancy that feels no love,
Hopeless immortality !
These are ours, alone and still
Seated on our icy hill !

Chorus of the Mountain Torrents.

Forth we come leaping to light from the gloom,
Joyously rushing from death's frozen womb ;
Long we lay prisoned through winters untold,
Blue vaults above us of ice gleaming cold,
Barren as moonlight, and cruel and drear,
Loveless and lifeless in silence austere,
Save for the falling ice-masses that boom,
Echoes of thunder, loud crashes of doom.

Faintly, how faintly, like morn in a dream,
Thickly veiled sunlight seemed scarcely to gleam,
Slowly, how slowly, a gold thread of day
Dripped through the crevice and fell where we lay !
Water, O water ! sweet dewdrops divine,
Firstborn of light and of love, how ye shine !
Joy-tears of hope, how ye glitter at morn !
Hark to the music ! the river is born !

Slowly, how slowly, the sun struggles through,
Far, far away in that faint streak of blue ;
Slowly, how slowly, we waken to bliss :
Is there a world that is gladder than this ?
Brother joins brother, see faster we haste ;
Yonder, out there, is the sunshine at last.
Hark to the murmurs of life from afar,
See, through the crevice, that flash like a star !

Now we burst forth, now the barrier is won ;
Oh, how it warms us to look on the sun !
Rush we and bound we, and shout with delight,
Forth from our prison to freedom and light !

Dancing with joy in the sunbeams of morn,
Filled with fresh gladness for ever new-born,
Downwards we rush in a chorus of song,
Life ever blessing, and love ever strong !

FIRST WATER-SPIRIT (*The Rain*).

O'er a thirsty land I hovered,
While the days to weeks rolled on ;
Every hedge with dust was covered,
Every flower looked sick and wan,
Cattle starved in plain and meadow,
On the herbage parched and brown,
Fever walked, a ghastly shadow,
In the close infected town.

Day by day I lingered, feigning
That to-night the shower would fall,
Night by night my gift restraining,
How I mocked earth's children all !
To the sky they looked, bemoaning,
While the clouds grew thin as air ;
Mothers weeping, sick men groaning,
Faces haggard in despair.

Rose a voice of supplication
Hoarsely from their parchèd throat,
And a wail of lamentation
On mine ear incessant smote,
Till at length my heart had pity
On the dry and choking land,
On the hot, plague-stricken city,
And I raised my laden hand,

Poised the golden pitcher meetly ;
—Rushed the shower, and streamed the plain.
Oh, how balmily, how sweetly
Rose the fragrance of the rain !
And a greenness, slowly, surely
Crept, where all seemed dead before,
And the river ran more purely,
And the brooks were heard once more ;

And the sick man rose to labour,
And the children ran to play,
Each man smiled to greet his neighbour,
Flowers grew bright, the world was gay ;
But they knew me not, nor heeded
(Though I freed them from their pain),
Straight forgetting how they pleaded
For the blessing of the rain.

SECOND WATER-SPIRIT (*The Well*).

In an archèd grotto deep,
Through the midday hours I sleep ;
Dewy moss and maidenhair
Shed a greenness everywhere,
And the moisture drips and glides,
Never hasting, never staying,
Down the cavern's marble sides ;
And the fringed grasses, swaying
O'er the steps that edge the light,
- Tempt the butterfly to rest ;
And pink-footed pigeons white,
Murmuring music in their breast,
Coo and sip, and coo again,
To their image, mirrored plain.

But the sun, at eve's decline,
Paints one brief and golden line
On the limpid surface smooth ;
And a maid in freshest youth
Dips her pitcher as she sings ;
—Circling still, and ever circling,
Swell the glassy water-rings
With a trembling and a gurgling
That subsides to show her face
Flushing 'neath her hood of blue ;
Then she moves with slowest pace
Homeward 'neath her burden new ;
—Daisies give her, as she goes,
One last look, and then they close.

But the treasure she doth bear
Makes the cot a palace fair ;
Old things touched by it are new,
Fresh as shining grass in dew ;
Food and drink and raiment pure,
Home-felt blessings hourly needed,
Health's refreshment, sickness' cure,
Gifts and gains that come unheeded,
In that earthen pitcher brought,
Issue from my lonely well.
—Who would ever give a thought
To the nymph within her cell ?
No, she lies and dreams away,
Dreams in twilight at noonday !

THIRD WATER-SPIRIT (*The River*).

Wandering on, I flow serenely,
In a livelong daydream bound,

Where the forest-shadows greenly
Tremble to my rippling sound,
And the swans above me riding
Brood, and dip their long necks low,
And the breath of Quiet, gliding,
Curls the leaves where lilies grow.

And the darting, hovering swallows
Flit and gleam, and then are gone,
And the redstart haunts the sallows,
As my stream winds on and on ;
Beauty, merged and fused in blessing,
Sings her lullaby of peace,
Like a mother's hand caressing,
Music, throbbing ere it cease.

Then a sail, far off beholden,
Steals across the westward line,
While the mellow water golden,
Full of glory, gleams like wine ;
And a sky-enkindled splendour
O'er the broadening ocean smiles,
And Delight than Thought more tender
Quivers through the sunset isles !

FOURTH WATER-SPIRIT (*The Tempest*).

Night-black clouds fast driven,
Furious winds that wail,
All the host of waters
Surging with the gale !

Stars scarce seen in heaven,
Fitful moonlight streaks,

Torn, tempestuous masses,
Swept o'er mountain peaks,

Caverns dark and hollow,
Deep in ocean's womb,
Foam like hellish laughter
Tossed amid the gloom,

Long-drawn mighty thunderings
Groaning evermore,
Crash of giant breakers
On the gleaming shore,

Sobs and shrieks despairing,
Flung to heaven in vain,
Brief and tearless partings,
Terror numbing pain !

Then, when cold grey morning
Tarries for the sun,
Yonder hull dismasted
Tells what night has done.

Wealth that none may gather,
Fast-locked coffers burst,
Silk and spice and treasure
Wantonly dispersed.

Ah, a dead white woman
Tossing with the deep !
Babe upon that bosom
Never more may sleep.

SCENE III.—*A narrow gorge by a deep ford.*

Evening.

PEREGRINUS, *alone.*

As swifter-paced the night draws nigh,
While autumn into winter turns,
I watch thee, striding through the sky,
Orion, with the belt that burns ;
I mark thee roam the heavens so free,
And would that I could roam with thee !

A thousand years, a thousand more,
Thou mov'st, resplendent, on thy way
Thou shin'st immortal as of yore,
Untired, undimmed, thyself thy day !
The world, with all its shifting range,
Thou seest, but dost never change.

O god-like giant !—and my days
Are prisoned by this rocky bound ;
Too soon thou passest from my gaze
Behind yon cliff with pine-trees crowned.
On earth I linger, yet my breast
Is stirred by thee, and cannot rest.

Thou, when the sun is veiled in night,
Com'st glittering forth in proud array ;
I stood beneath his noonday light,
And shrank not from its fiercest ray ;
Methought the sun but rose that he
Might light the wor'd to look on me !

Where is it now, that golden prime,
When I myself, no less than thou,
Seemed lifted to a height sublime,
With laurel wreathed my thick-tressed brow,
And all men crowded round, to view
His form that could a world subdue?

Where now the shout, the breathless pause,
The ring of faces closely pressed,
The strength redoubled by applause,
The boiling fury in my breast,
The thrill, the triumph, and the pride,
The thirst for glory satisfied?

Fled, like a dream ! and where is he,
The hero of that splendid hour ?
Who asks or cares what he may be,
And who recalls his boasted power ?
His days slip by, and leave behind
No trace, forgotten by mankind.

I've watched the moon, a crescent fine,
Grow seven times full and seven times dim,
And star by star in season shine
Above yon chasm's sharp-severed rim ;
No message comes from heaven or earth,
My deeds and I seem nothing worth.

I've watched the ferns uncurling slow,
The foxglove bells that bloom and die ;
Above my head the mountain roe
Flits, like a shadow 'gainst the sky ;
Swift comes the sun, swift goes the rain,
While still I watch and wait in vain.

How fast the twilight grows ! above me brood,
Vaster and blacker, yon tall peaks and pines,
White water foams below me, louder peals,
The ever, ever-sounding, maddening roar,
So grateful once, so wearisome at length,
A long six months monotonously heard !
Fain would I change it for the glare, the thirst,
The silence of parched lips and burning tongue,
By sandy plains and summer suns begotten
In some broad shadeless desert of the south.
O for a noon of Africa to-night !
O for the glorious quivering whitening haze
Shed from pure heat ! above, a blaze of blue
Hotter than molten brass, more bright than flame,
While earth, a tawny lion, sleeps outstretched
In noontide calm of motionless repose !

Enter TRAVELLER.

Is that a light that flickers o'er the ford,
Or wandering meteor fire ? From point to point
It moves, yet rather glides than walks ; it comes
Crossing my way. Ah ! how my eyes mistook !
'Tis but a traveller, wading with his staff
From stone to stone, safe through the dangerous ford.
Good night, and welcome hither, friend !

Traveller. I pray you
Tell me the way to climb yon pass ; the night
Comes swift upon us, and my errand yields
Small leisure for delay.

Peregrinus. By yonder steps
Still gleaming white, there lies your rocky path,
The road then plain before you.

Traveller. Sir, my thanks ;
I half despaired —your voice as music met me.

But, oh, what godlike majesty is yours !
Such stateliness, such strength, such towering height
Make you a wonder for the general eye ;
Yet Solitude and Twilight cannot veil
Those vast proportions and that royal grace,
Power lightly borne, and effortless displayed.
'Tis not for such as you to linger here.
And I methinks have heard your name ere now.
Art thou not Peregrinus ? he whose name
Lives like a proverb in our speech, whose deeds
Even fertile Fancy betters not in telling,
Nor feigning poets overtop in praise.
Oh, art thou he indeed ? Thou art ; then wherefore,
When all the world awaits thee, hide thee here ?
Why, when I reach yon city, let me but say,
' I spake with Peregrinus,' every face
Will wake from dullness, every ear prick up,
And straight a buzz of voices questioning me,
' What news of him ? How looked he ? Is his
strength
Gone, as the story ran—— ? '

Peregrinus. What sayst thou? How?
Who said my strength was gone?

Traveller. Oh, 'tis mere folly ;
Such tales will spread abroad, and tales of you
Are thick as twinkling minnows in a brook.
Who heeds such petty restlessness of tongue ?
For tongues will wag when great men disappear
All in a moment from the gaze of all.
Some said a sudden madness sent from heaven
Chastised your lofty pride, but others knew
That you were sick of love—— Forgive me, I
But speak the things Chance utters in mine ears,
Even as the mountain echo mocks our voice !

Some said the nymphs had rapt you far from men
(As Hylas once), some clamorously maintained,
Worsted in combat, baffled and ashamed——

Peregrinus. I tell thee 'tis a lie, a thousand lies,
Each blacker than the last. By heaven and earth,
I'll have his blood who dares to hawk abroad
Such slanderous wares, such foul throat-choking tales,
Shameless as he who speaks them ! What? I am
conquered ?

Who said it? Who durst say it?

Traveller. Ah, good friend,
'Tis but a shadow fight that you would wage
With Slander's shifting, disembodied might,
That, hit before, still mocks you from behind,
Laughs when you bruise your own hand with the
force

Of your own angry impotence, and straight
Repeats the spiteful fable once again.
Since no man says what all men do report,
And blameless each when every man is blamed,
Thou canst not fight with Rumour, canst not crush
Conjecture 'neath thy heel. One only way
Remains. Come forth, this solitude forsake,
Shake thy old prowess from its slumber. Rise,
And show thee to the world thyself indeed !

Peregrinus. What reck I of the world? Let the
dogs bark,
Or howl, or whine, or fawn, do what they will,
Feed on street garbage, spurned by noble feet !
I go my way and heed them not.

Traveller. Be 't so ;
All's one to me. I may not tarry here,
But yet to-morrow, when, the city reached,
Folk ask of my adventures, and I say,

'I chanced on Peregrinus yesternight,'
And they demand, 'What news, what news of *him*,
Our pride, our hero?' shall I answer——?

Peregrinus.

Nothing ;

I am dead to them, and they to me.

Traveller.

Amen ;

But dead men have their epitaphs writ fair.
What is thy epitaph? That, sick of life,
With thy magnificent, unconquered powers,
Thy manhood unimpaired, thy forces whole,
With all the world before thee, thou didst choose
To waste and linger out thy life obscure,
A beast of burden, carrying o'er the ford
(I know thee and thy ways !) the old, the faint,
Poor shreds and refuse of humanity,
For what? some mean misshapen copper coin,
Doled out by grudging Poverty.

Peregrinus.

Hold thy peace !

Could such as I e'er take from such as they,
Heaven strike this arm with palsy !

Traveller.

Wherefore, then,

What wild hallucination, baseless dream,
Commands thee here to waste thy time, thyself,
And all men's hopes of thee?

[*A pause. Peregrinus is silent.*

Bethink thee, friend,

Shake off this sickly, mouldy, creeping growth
Of thy fantastic lassitude. Be sure
Stronger than thou there breathes no living man,
And sooner shall this torrent cease to flow,
That runs and runs and will for ever run
With breathless haste, unhesitating speed,
Than such a one appear.

Peregrinus.

Who told thee? Who?

I ne'er have breathed my thought to living ear,
Save one.

Traveller. Ah, friend, the men of every day
May come and go, unnoticed as this stone
I fling into the torrent's bed, unheeding
Where it may fall ; but should some precious ring,
Ruby or diamond, from our grasp be lost,
We bear it not thus lightly. *How* I know
Thy inmost thought, perchance some other day
Will prove a merry tale for thee and me.
I know thee better than thyself. Nay, come,
Thou'lt live to thank me ! Ay, 'tis good, I see
Thy yielding silence but foreruns thy speech.

[*A child's voice is heard.*]

Thou'rt coming ! Welcome to the world of men !

Peregrinus. Was that a cry ?

Traveller. Why not ? Belike a bird
Calling its mate i' the darkness.

Peregrinus. No : a child !—
Seest thou not something white out yonder ?

Traveller. Ay,
Foam frothing o'er the stone. Why, friend, thou
seemst

A fanciful and frightened girl : this comes
Of loneliness and brooding. Speed we on,
The hour grows late. [*A child's voice is heard.*]

Voice. Help, help ! across the ford
I pray thee, bear me !

Peregrinus. Ay. Come, little one !
Fear not—'tis Peregrinus, in these arms
Thou wilt be safe.

Traveller. I charge thee, come with me.
What, for a puny and unthankful babe
Lose all ?

Peregrinus. I may not leave him thus alone.
Think, if to-morrow, circled with the throng—
Made much of, welcomed, praised, my name sent up
To heaven with deafening plaudits—there should
come

A terrified, forsaken childish face
Betwixt my pride and me ; the wail of death,
Faint though it were, would fill mine ear, and dull
All sense, all sound beside. I *cannot* leave him :
See, see the little hands are stretched towards me !
He fears me not—he trusts me.

Traveller. Ha ! it moves
My laughter. Here's thy strong one, Peregrinus—
A mighty giant, truly !

Peregrinus. Mock me not :
I must do what I must. Come hither, child !

Traveller. To think, belike to-morrow I shall stand
Amid th' incredulous multitude, and say :
' Why—Peregrinus—'twere a jest indeed,
Could you but see him—prattling to a babe !—
The petty creature ! such a weight, forsooth,
Poised on his labouring shoulders !—like an ass
He plies 'twixt shore and shore.'

Peregrinus. Peace, peace, and leave me !
Gird at me with thy mates—I care not for it :
My choice is mine, and matters not to thee.
Come hither, little one !

Traveller. Oh, when I crave
Motive for mirth, I need but think of this.
Who knows what men may come to?—Bravely
done !
Oh, I could laugh to choking—splitting sides,
Till mirth became a torment—at the thought
Of Peregrinus—Bravely, Peregrinus !

I thank thy folly for the merriest tale
That e'er set table in a roar. Farewell,
Scorn on thy second childhood, drivelling fool !

[*Exit.*

Peregrinus (taking child in his arms).

Fear not, little one, although
Wonder 'tis I love thee so !—
But thy hand upon my cheek
Seems a blessing strange and new—
Something that I durst not seek,
Something to my heart-beats true.

On my shoulder be thy throne
(Feather-light thou seem'st to me);
Oh, wert thou indeed my own,
What would I not do for thee ?
Sweet one, like a flower of spring
Com'st thou hither—be my King !

Ah, my hand is stained with blood—
Thou art innocent and good ;
Couldst thou look on me by day ?
Durst I raise my glance to thine ?
On this dark and watery way
Let me dream that thou art mine !

Through this angry ford I wade—
Every step is known to me :
On thy mother's bosom laid
Safer thou couldst never be.
Would that thou and I could fare
Thus together everywhere !

[*A sound of gathering tempest is heard.*

What is this ?—my limbs grow weak ;
Oft I've borne a mightier freight,

Yet methinks, e'en while I speak,
Heavier on me grows thy weight,
Scarcely can my steps proceed ;
Child—art thou a child indeed ?

What is this ?—a darkening sky,
While the pine-woods crash and roar,
And the fleeting rack on high
Where the stars are seen no more ;—
Whence this wild tempestuous wail—
Wind and rain and scourging hail ?

Voice of the Winds. Woe, woe, woe
For the curse and the doom of earth,
For Eden deserted and lost,
For fallen and bewildered man !

Woe, woe, woe
For Creation's travail and groans,
For the thorns and thistles of toil,
The bitter birth-pangs of Eve !

Woe, woe, woe
For the righteous, brother-slain !—
The voice of blood that cries
For vengeance from earth to heaven !

Woe, woe, woe
For Motherhood's bitter tears,
For the wanderer's death in life—
The pain over-great to bear !

Woe, woe, woe
For the storm in the heart of man,
In the bosom of restless earth
Accursèd for evermore !

Peregrinus. Struggling 'neath the heavy
weight,
Scarcely can I onward tread.

Voice. Wonder not, the load is great
Piled upon My guiltless head :
Since they crowned Me with the thorn,
Adam's toil by Me is borne !

Voice of the Winds. Rolling onward, growing
ever,
Like the waves of some dark river,
Comes the cry of mortal woe—
One vast stream of lamentation,
Swelled by every age and nation,
Till the flood-tides overflow ;

From the dungeon, dark, despairing,
Year by year the spirit wearing,
While the wasted flesh grows wan ;
From the rack, the cross, the burning,
War's fierce fury undiscerning,
—All that man inflicts on man ;

From the hearts of women riven,
Maids and mothers captive driven,
Jewels trodden in the mire,
Weeping bitterest tears for sweetest,
Stung by insolence unmeetest,
Tools of every base desire ;

From the children, cowering, pining—
While the sun abroad is shining—
In some dark and fetid room,
Sick and wizened, starved and taunted,
By some nameless terror haunted,
Creeping mutely to their tomb ;

From the writhing slave tormented .
For some fancy soon repented,
 Plaything of a ghastly mirth ;
From the maniac, chained, degraded,
Filthy, famine-pinched, unaided,
 Saddest shape that haunts the earth ;

From the lazar-house where languish
Countless forms of human anguish
 Through th' interminable day,
Each man 'neath his burden groaning,
And his neighbour's pain disowning,
 While he chides at Death's delay ;

From the bed of Death—oh, hearken,
While the shades of Terror darken,
 And the spirit bids farewell
To the light and hope of living,
And the soul, in chill misgiving,
 Listens for the body's knell !

Hark, the passing bell is tolling,
And the sounds of grief are rolling,
 Widely echoed, loud and long ;
Pain and woe and lamentation
Sobbing through each deep vibration,
 Human sorrow's undersong !

Peregrinus. Ah, no further can I go ;
Lo ! I sink on bended knee.

Voice. 'Tis the weight of human woe,
'Tis the Cross upborne by Me ;
All their sorrows I must share,
And of every grief am heir.

Peregrinus. Hark ! the rain and thunder,
hark !

See the lightning deadly wild
Flashing, streaming through the dark.
Who and what art thou, O Child ?
Whence those voices high and low,
Mingled strains that swell and grow ?

Voice of the Winds.

Deeper, deeper still
Sounds the note of ill,
While the tones begin,
Fraught with human sin.

Blacker still the gloom,
Heavier yet the doom,
Like a mountain piled
On the Undefined.

Anger, wrath and strife,
Envy poisoning life,
Guilt by Passion fed
Whence all love has fled ;

Sloth and swinish greed,
Dullness for its meed,
Sour Self-love that loathes
Even the self it clothes ;

Falsehood, meanness, lies,
Fraud with narrow eyes,
Treachery's hidden hold
On disgraceful gold ;

Mad Ambition's bent,
Endless Discontent,
Secret Slander's guile,
Hissing 'neath her smile ;

Hypocritic face
Poisoning holiest grace,
Worst things aping best,
Sin in priestly vest ;

Prodigal unthrift
Wasting each good gift,
Thanklessness, the meed
Of each kindly deed ;

Cruelty, whose gain
Is another's pain ;
Blasphemy, whose cry
Mocks at God on high ;

Frenzy's torch of flame,
Self-destruction's shame,
Terror's wild-eyed glare,
Fathomless despair !

Peregrinus. Blackest horrors o'er me brood ;
Crushed, my limbs beneath me sway,
And the boisterous water-flood
Sweeps me like a leaf away !
O thou Terrible, thy might
Frays me worse than death or night !

Voice. Well mayst thou lament and groan,
And beneath thy burden fall,
For the iniquity of all
Lies upon My head alone ;

I was made a curse and shame,
I Myself as sin became.

Peregrinus. Ah ! I yield me ; now at length
Find I Him I sought so long !
Thou than Evil's self more strong,
Thou Thyself art Strength of strength.
Now I own Thy mastery, now
Strive no more, the Victor thou !

But what is this—what sudden change steals o'er
me ?

Lulled is the storm, the horror put to flight ;
It seems as if some sudden power upbore me,
And made my youth return, my burden light.
O joy ! O wonder ! such a spring of gladness
Bounds in my heart and veins, divinest madness !

I walk as light as air, and all around me
The floods run music, and the waters sing ;
And is it day or night ? and have I found me
Within the presence of my heart's dear King ?
Oh, let me see Thy face in rapturous vision,
Though blindness follow straight on such fruition !

Ah ! for this hour how have I longed and waited !
How oft have mused, how oft have dreamed of Thee !
But far unlike to all my thoughts created
Thou cam'st at length, disguised in Infancy.
Methought 'twas Nature's voice for pity pleaded,
And *Thou* wast there, and might'st have passed
unheeded !

Show me Thyself, that I may see and know Thee,
And in the joy of Thy sweet presence move ;

Be all my own, for all myself I owe Thee,
 And love of Strength has turned to strength of Love !
 I triumph as Thy slave ; my former story
 Is lost, forgotten, melted in Thy glory !

Voice. Thou canst not see Me yet, thou canst but
 serve Me

With all the might thou hast, upon this earth ;
 And if at length thou hopest to deserve Me,
 Count no desert of thine of any worth ;
 Serve thou My servants, even the poorest, weakest,
 Behold Me there, find there the Lord thou seekest.

‘ Bearer of Christ ’ be thou, to all who meet thee
 A glimpse of blessedness, a pledge of joy !
 And whosoe’er at matin-tide shall greet thee,
 Shall feel that day from no foul thing annoy ;
 The helpless bless thee, potent yet most tender,
 And heroes learn thy might in self-surrender.

Bearer of Christ be thou in all thy going,
 In heart and body His thy whole life long ;
 Fight in His name, all evil overthrowing,
 When most thou own’st thy weakness, then most
 strong ;
 So shall He bear thee up, and still deliver,
 And safely bring thee home through Death’s dark
 river.

Morning.

CHORUS OF WATER-SPIRITS.

Rejoice, you host of waters,
 Ye thronging floods of might,
 O clap your hands together,
 In still-renewed delight !

Rejoice, for ye are holy
In Him, the Pure, the True,
Who, water's self baptising,
Hath blessed and hallowed you.

Henceforth in flood and fountain
Celestial virtue dwells,
Life-giving streams eternal
Are poured from crystal wells ;
Each shower with blessing laden
From God to man descends,
The rainbow's threefold glory
O'er earth in promise bends.

Break forth, thou mystic river,¹
From God's own altar run,
Flow forth from God's own threshold,
Swift hastening toward the sun !
Oh, rise and deepen round us
With ever-swelling crest,
Till we, our feet forsaking,
Are carried on thy breast !

Stream onward to the desert,
And bid its dryness flee ;
O haste and heal the saltness
Even of th' accursèd sea !
With living fish in thousands
O let those waters teem ;
Bring life where'er thou goest,
And wide and wider stream !

¹ Ezek. xlvii.

Unfading trees of beauty
Upon thy banks be seen,
Whose fruit is ever fragrant
'Mid boughs still budding green ;
The leaves shall be for healing,
The fruit shall be for meat ;
Thy bourne the land of morning,
Thy source the mercy-seat !

* * Since writing the above Chorus my attention has been drawn to some fine lines on the same subject in the *Baptistery*, by Isaac Williams.

POEMS

THE BRIDGE

O HAUNTED world ! with these thy outward shows,
That part and just disclose
Some flying vision of the things that are,
How many a face hast thou
Half hidden from me now,
That comes and goes again, like some cloud-
peeping star !

I see them hovering everywhere I go—
Beside the firelight's glow,
Beneath the April buds, in sun and rain ;
Their laughter scarce has died,
I feel them at my side—
Who says that they are dead and cannot come
again ?

They climbed beside us on the mountain ridge ;
They crossed by yonder bridge—
That narrow bridge, that fragile arch of stone ;
And now their voice is drowned,
The thundering waters sound,
The rocks rise up, and they—oh, whither are they
gone ?

Still on our path unfaded lies the spray
They plucked in daring play ;

The dewy bank they trod still bears the track
Of climbing hands and feet ;
The echoes still repeat
That ringing laugh—the last—and here the boughs
bent back !

O dark, deep-plunging waters, with your roar
That thunders ‘ Nevermore ! ’
Where have ye hid them—whither walk they now ?
What, must they ne’er be seen
’Twixt ferns and branches green ?
No?—not in far-off vision on the mountain’s brow ?

Can things be near as our own hearts to-day,
The next so far away ?
And can a moment turn our all to nought ?
What is there in mankind
That makes the fickle wind
More constant than his life, less subtle than his
thought ?

Why should we spend long nights and countless days
Still wandering in the maze
Of sad perplexity, that fain would guess
At their new life untried,
When knowledge is denied,
And old Experience mocks us, clad in Fancy’s dress ?

As toward a cradle, empty still, and white,
Some mother glides at night,
And o’er the pillow bends, with yearnings strong,
Until she seems to see
The baby face to be,
Yet, whatsoe’er she dreams, one day may prove it
wrong—

As she, through long-drawn hours content to wait,
Ne'er murmurs at the fate
That hides the mystery from her tender eye,
For very love intense
Endures the long suspense,
And would not know too soon, lest hope itself
should die—

So, musing o'er that life which never dies,
A thousand fancies rise :
We shape the Future by the things of earth ;
Yet far from Truth we stray,
We *cannot* be as they ;
The very mystery shrines the miracle of birth.

And if we saw and touched and knew—oh, where
Would be our hope and prayer ?
Thrice blessed be the thought, we cannot know :
There's something then above
To feed progressive love ;
We cannot be our whole best selves below.

O Death ! thou bride with features grandly pale,
We bless thee for thy veil :
There's somewhat beauteous still beyond our ken.
Rejoice !—with all our lore
We cannot half explore
The heights and depths of God, the hopes and joys
of men.

O dear, dear souls ! kind hands we loved to hold,
Now hid in coffins cold—
O friends ! so near a little while ago—
If child and mother move
In one blest world of love,
'Tis love that knits us yet far closer than we know.

Thank God, who veils the spirit's growth divine .
In dim, thrice-curtained shrine,
And hides the nascent glory from our sight !
Oh, be it ours to wait,
And trust Him soon or late
To bid our darkness yield, and manifest His light !

SILENCE

O THOU who wrap'st us in th' eternal fold
Of thy soft garment, on whose breast we lie,
Strange power, whose face we never may behold,
Whose voice has never answered back our cry,
Say, art thou deaf or blind,
Unheeding or unkind ?
Is *thy* face veiled or ours? Hast thou a tale untold?

Oft when our throbbing conscience wakes to deem
She hears the avenging footstep on its way,
Thy spell descends, and our misgivings seem
The self-raised phantoms of a mind astray ;
So children lie and mark
Strange faces in the dark,
And sick men start and shudder at a dream.

Oft, goaded on by fierce and cruel pain,
We cry aloud, upbraiding unjust Fate,
Th' unheeding world rolls past us in disdain,
Stones wound our feet, fast closed is Pity's gate,
Thy mists obstruct our prayer,
We shout through stifling air,
And grope along blank walls, in vain, in vain.

Oft when we seek, amid the wreck of years,
For Love's dear presence in Love's ancient haunt,
Mid lonely chambers where no form appears,
No touch is felt, and memory seems to taunt
Our anguish by the keen
Sharp thrust of things unseen;
Thou fill'st the space left empty by our tears.

No voice, no presence, nothing, where of old
Kind words, sweet music, tenderest feelings flowed,
No fire to cheer us on the hearth-stone cold,
No welcome at the turning of the road !
Blank strangeness everywhere,
A chill in summer air,—
How *can* the flowers still blossom from the mould?

A spell-bound breathless wonder that pervades
The light of day, the air, the paths we knew,
A hesitating doubt that haunts the glades
And asks, 'Can I be I? Can this be true?'
But *now* it seemed a home
Where sorrow ne'er might come,
And *then*——we wake to mourn life's sunshine as
it fades.

Dread monarch, ruling with triumphant sway
Our present life—that, questioning still the Past,
Hears nought to bless the Future—Silence, say,
Must thy supremacy for ever last?
Can nothing break thy spell,
And from th' eternal well
Pour forth the spring of speech now locked, ice-
bound and fast?

Dost thou beat back the fluttering wings of Prayer?
And is it all in vain, a childish tale?
And is there none to hearken or to care,
To hear us when we laugh or when we wail?
Is yon Cathedral chime
An idle pulse of time,
The spirit of man poured forth to empty air?

Still neutral, still impervious, still unknown,
Strong to refuse, safe guardian of thy trust,
While Hope and Memory, by thy sands o'erstrown,
Lie hid beneath a waste of level dust,
O stillness, worse than storm!
O void, than direst form
More terrible! thou turn'st the heart to stone.

THE REPLY

I hear thee, I have heard thee, I will hear.
The weak restrain not speech, the strong control.
To me the far-off ages seem the near,
Thou seest a part, but I the perfect whole,
Therefore revere me more;
Thrice dreadful is the roar
Of thunder for that pause ere yet it burst and roll.

Still gathering up its strength, yon breaker vast
Sucked drop by drop in its unhurried swell,
And poised the weight of water, ere at last
With rhythmic roar it curved and crashed and fell;
My waves even thus keep time
Deliberately sublime,
For Nature's pace, like God's, knows nought of slow
nor fast.

And thou forsooth wouldst gather, in thy haste,
The first rude pebble that thine hand can reach,
And fling it wildly 'mid the watery waste,
And think the splash and foam responsive speech.
Ah, fool ! not thus, not yet
Thy craving can be met,
Too mighty are the powers 'midst whom thy soul is
placed !

Yet deem it not in vain, this longing deep,
This ear of thine attent to every sound ;
And woe to him who yearns not, nor doth weep—
By him who seeks for nothing, nought is found,
The wakeful ready mind
Its own reward must find,
Hears Love's first distant footfall, while the world's
asleep.

Even as thy pulse, to ocean's pulse akin,
Throbs with thy heart in microcosmic tides,
As ocean's music, by thine ear drunk in,
With strong recurrence in thy brain abides,
So let thy spirit's power
Forecast the final hour
When Speech, of Silence born, his empire shall begin !

*A VESTAL VIRGIN*¹

Dum Capitulum
Scandet cum tacita virgine Pon'tifex.
HOR. *Od. III.* 30.

O MARBLE woman with the perfect grace
Of undulating raiment, white and fine,
In half-suspended motion, face to face,
Shoulder to shoulder, almost touching mine,
How strange thy nearness makes thy farness
seem,
Pale as a ghost, and vivid as a dream !

Even thus thou movedst day by day ; and so
When thy fair bosom heaved with living swell,
And heart-beats throbbed with ceaseless ebb and
flow,
Those folds of beauty round thy stature fell,
And that pale face and that too pensive mouth
Bespake the rich ripe beauty of the South.

Those pale and stony eyes were glowing then
With who knows what of scarcely veiled fire
Of beauteous womanhood, aloof from men,
The woman's nature changeless and entire !
How didst thou pass, unscathed, those perilous
years ?
Where was thy heart, and what its hopes, its
fears ?

¹ See the beautiful statues lately discovered in the Atrium Vestæ at Rome.

Was it the love of country filled the place
Of home and children ? Did the sacred flame
Keep thy heart warm ? We read not in thy face
Heroic purpose, or the lofty aim
Of some grand patriot-mother from whose heart
Rome's stubborn sons have drawn their manliest
part.

What didst thou love ? The sacredness, the state,
The awe, the majesty that girt thee round ?
High place on festal days, the voice of Fate
'Twas thine to utter, the mysterious sound
Of thine own auguries ?—or couldst thou tell
Beneath such state what trivial cares may dwell ?

Who knows what pricks of envy or what pangs
Of bitter jealousy were hid beneath
The ritual's lofty march, what serpents' fangs
Envenomed life for thee with poison-teeth ?
How great, and yet how small, such lives may be,
We feel, fair creature, when we look on thee.

'Tis well we know not more : 'tis well that time
Should sweep the trivial and the mean away,
Yet leave the thought of womanhood's fair prime,
Pure as a lily on a summer's day,
Offered to Heaven for Earth—the stainless life
To hallow yon great city's sin and strife.

The love, the pious care, deep-seated awe,
That gathered round that ne'er-extinguished fire,
The shrine of this world's masters, at whose law
All other laws must bow, all Might retire ;—
'Twas here the nation's heart, the nation's home,
The household hearth of all the sons of Romé.

Beside the solemn Pontiff, up the steep
Of yonder Capitol, behold her glide,
A veiled and stately form, in silence deep
Of meditative musing ! Far descried,
She seems the speechless soul of holiness,
That *something* in the heart none dares express ;

The inward spirit that in man abides
Akin to self-restraint and virtuous shame ;
The modesty of greatness, that confides
Not in itself, but Heaven ; the trembling aim
Shot upward by the self-withdrawing eye ;
The yearning scarce embodied in a sigh ;

The shadow of unearthliness on earth,
The deep-felt potency of things unseen ;
The vision gained at death, half lost at birth,
Of things that are, and will be, and have been
Ere Rome began, and while it lasts, and when
'Tis scarce a memory to the sons of men.

She *is* a woman, with a woman's lot,
A woman's weakness, and a woman's fears ;
But these have past, and are as they were not !
A glory hovering from the far-off years
Surrounds her now—she stands before our sight
A flower in darkness feeling for the light !

May 11, 1889.

*ST. CECILIA*¹

AT ROME.

'Tis she indeed ! as fair, as still
 As when her virgin blood was shed ;
 The ages have not worked their will
 On that slight form, that graceful head ;

The yellow rock, the scooped-out cell,
 Where once they laid her, whispering low,
 Has kept its sacred treasure well,
 As mountain-hollow guards the snow.

The purple iris year by year
 Put forth green swords and tufted bloom,
 The Roman skies glowed hot and clear
 Above her unsuspected tomb ;

The wicked world renewed its might ;
 Ambition reigned where Faith had bled ;
 What though the gods were hid from sight ?
 Their spirits walked the earth instead.

The music of the heavenly sphere
 Grew fainter, rarer, and more wan,
 And louder in its fierce career
 The chariot of the world rolled on—

¹ The marble figure of St. Cecilia, reproducing the pose in which the body was found on its disinterment, preserved almost as by a miracle, and probably in the very attitude in which she received martyrdom, is familiar to all visitors to Rome.

Rolled o'er the homes of faith and prayer,
The sunken crypts, the chapels dim,
The catacombs, whose breezeless air
Had throbb'd with many a Christian hymn.

Few thought of that sweet life whose breath
Uprose in music to the sky,
Few thought of that heroic death,
Those three strange days of ecstasy,

When, as a sunset cloud, not yet
Dissolved, yet melting fast in light,
Hangs o'er the city's smoke and fret,
And sheds its benison in flight,

She lingered ere she passed away,
'Twixt heaven and earth in strange suspense ;
The gates of heaven wide open lay
To sight transcending earthly sense,

And music wafted from on high
Came floating earthwards, and anon
Her voice sends back the melody—
She dies in music, like a swan.

And was it here indeed she dwelt,
And gazed where now our glances fall,
And on this time-worn pavement knelt,
—Her shadow waved on yonder wall?

O'erwhelming thought ! to be so near
That half-angelic womanhood,
Almost to feel, and see, and hear
The wrestling shapes of Ill and Good !

The powers of darkness and of light
Seem mustering round us ; Silence speaks ;
Our spirit feels an answering might,
And runs to welcome what it seeks.

Farewell, farewell, thou loveliest saint,
As brave as fair, as sweet as strong,
Thou lily without spot or taint,
That shed'st thy perfume all day long.

Still giving, like thy Lord above,
Withholding nought from low or high,
Unbounded in thy generous love,
White-blossomed daughter of the sky !

In heaven thou scarce canst rise more fair
Than now thou liest in tranquil grace ;
But one thing still awaits us there—
To look upon thy hidden face.¹

That face, long lost to earthly ken,
What heavenly beauty will it wear ?
And shall we gaze upon thee then ?
And, sister, wilt thou own us there ?

ROME : 1889.

¹ In the statue the face is turned earthwards, so as to be invisible to the spectator.

AT ASSISI

O SWEETEST April evening, fade not yet ;
 And fade not yet, thou soft Italian sky ;
 Fade not, thou tender streak,
 The sunset's lingering robe !

O fade not yet, soft silvery olive woods,
 Far as the blue horizon's utmost hill,
 A sea of whispering leaves
 That veil no depths of death.

O tarry yet, long-yearned-for vision ; say,
 Hast thou not yearned for us, as we for thee ?
 Sure 'tis not every heart
 That feels thee, like our own !

How hast thou waited for us night by night,
 While in thy gleams the village children played,
 Unknowing and unmoved,
 Themselves a part of thee !

How have we waited for thee, far away,
 Athirst for thy calm loveliness and peace,
 An unimagined joy,
 —Scarce owning our own need !

Ah, look again ! the old brown solemn tower,
 That exquisite pure sky ! Ethereal Love
 That kisses every stone
 To beautify and bless !

And oh ! that keen and solitary star,
That swims behind the iron cross on high,
Fair guardian of the night,
How tender is its gaze !

Stay, stay, the old bell trembles, and a voice,
The inarticulate, tear-stirring tones,
That roll from age to age,
The Angelus of eve !

Tones lost in their own echoes, sweetly blent,
Heard through the long Past echoing by the
heart—
The living and the dead
Seem listening, praying still.

- ‘ O fear not, pilgrims,’ so that voice would say,
‘ Fear not to turn and go your wonted way,
And fear not Hope’s despair and Faith’s decay.
- ‘ What though the world wherein your lot is cast
Have lost the tender brightness of the past,
And the blue skies above seem overcast?
- ‘ What though ye miss the passion and the power,
The heaven-unveiling trance, th’ ecstatic hour,
The life of vision, with its wondrous dower—
- ‘ The sympathy of saintship, more benign
Than even the poet’s glance in rapture fine,
For whom each twinkling dewdrop gleams divine?
- ‘ Is Francis dead ? Your spirits answer, “ Nay.”
His world is past, yet still he lives to-day,
In Love and Faith that ne’er can lose their sway.

‘ He walks not ’mid the olive groves of old,
His birds, his flowers he rarely doth behold,
In bleak black streets he wanders, wet and cold.

‘ Yet still the flame within his spirit glows,
The love of Christ that banishes repose,
The yearning for the souls of friends and foes.

‘ The marks are on his hands, his feet, his brow ;
You may not see them—oft he passes now,
And works we know not where, nor when, nor
how,

‘ In many an altered shape and strange disguise ;
A beggar now, and now he meets our eyes
In courtly raiment that his look belies.

‘ He cannot die, he lives in all who love ;
The Power that moved him has not ceased to
move,
As man himself in his own soul must prove.

‘ For Beauty comes and goes, but Love abides,
Untouched by race or place, or times or tides,
And in her heart the soul of beauty hides ;

‘ Even as the virtue of the flowers of May
Lies deep in earth, till breeze and shower and ray
Call them to starry life—they wait their day.

.

‘ And ye—O, fear not, for to Heaven more nigh
Is the true heart, beneath the dullest sky,
Than aught which fills the ear or charms the
eye.’

And yet, and yet, O gracious eventide !
O lonely tower, watched by thy lonely star !
 O musical deep tones,
 On soft Italian air !

Is it in vain that spell-bound here we stand,
And drink deep draughts of your full loveliness,
 And is it all of earth,
 Or touched with light from heaven ?

'Twas your own beauty won him first, and Love,
In Beauty's raiment clad, that softly stole
 Deep through his dreaming heart,
 And won him from himself.

And when he woke, the garb of Love was changed,
Her face was pallid, and in raiment mean,
 As Poverty in rags
 She bade him woo his bride.

Even thus, O Love ! thou hid'st thyself to-day ;
But now and then thy loveliness revealed
 Bursts on us, and this hour
 Betrays thee as thou art.

See how the infinite mysterious hills
Melt in the far-off sky ; the sunset gleam
 Has slowly paled ; that star
 Reigns in the heavens alone !

So reign within our hearts, divinest Love,
Though all beside be dim, both sight and sound,
 And hushed and still we wait
 The starry night of Death !

May 2, 1889.

GOOD FRIDAY AT ROME

DARKNESS o'er all the land !
 And was it such a day as this ?
 A day of beauty and of bliss,
 When sun-warmed flowers expand,

When wingèd cyclamen
 Lurks in each green and grassy place,
 And many a white narcissus-face
 Peers forth by bank and glen,

And like a sigh of joy
 Soft violets' breath enchants the air ;
 Or is it grief, less sad than fair,
 Or love, for speech too coy ?

Was this the face of earth
 When that great cloud of darkness fell
 And quenched it, as a funeral knell
 Breaks in on festal mirth ?

Was all the world as bright
 That day, of old, as now in Rome ?
 —Perhaps Tiberius' island-home
 Was sparkling in the light,

While sapphire-blue the heaven
 Shone o'er him, and the playful waves
 Made music in the sea-side caves,
 Nor ceased at fall of even.

Perhaps when, far away,
The suffering Lord of Glory hung,
With bleeding brows and parchèd tongue,
In darkness at noonday,

This fair Italian scene
Felt no strange awe, no shuddering thrill,
No spirit passed from hill to hill
Through rustling woods of green !

The new-winged butterfly
Poised lightly on the flowers new-born,
The lizard through the springing corn
Flashed, if a foot went by ;

All was so glad, so gay,
All, save the heart of man alone ;
But deeper gloom o'erhung the throne,
Than even the cross, that day !

1889.

*IN THE CLOISTER OF SAN ZENO,
VERONA*

Io fui Abate in San Zeno a Verona. (*Dante.*)

Down pours the sun in midday stream,
And red as morning sky
Yon marble columns burn and gleam,
The roof glows hot on high ;

Each fairy dandelion ball,
Unbreathed on, stands upright ;
No footsteps in the cloister fall,
And noon is still as night ;

These stately pillars watch the dead,
While soft sweet airs of May
Through all this silent world are shed,
And loveliness of day.

Near yonder well the lizards dart,
And rattle round the fence ;
From every chink and blackness start,
And straight have vanished hence ;

Amid the grass and ferns they flit,
In soft deep shadows dwell,
Or bask in sunshine where we sit
Beside the echoing well ;

Or wriggling midst sepulchral stones,
In dry dark vaults at play,
Their life among the dead men's bones
Glides merrily away.

They know a little less than we
Of all the secrets here ;
They never sought themselves to see
In that deep circle clear ;

For them light-springing tufts of fern
Have neither name nor charm ;
They feel the sun and wind, nor learn
The sense of ' cold ' and ' warm.'

But oh ! the well, so dark and deep,
That throws us back ourselves ;
And oh ! the graves whose secrets sleep,
Whereto no sexton delves !

Dumb walls, hard stones, and grassy green !
The veil that none may raise
Is on our spirits, and between
Our world and bygone days.

Here thoughts, from God and nature sent,
Like doves are hovering nigh ;
Here might one live and pray content,
And here serenely die.

Yet, think ! this pillar where we stand,
Still warm where sunbeams fell,
Perhaps has glowed 'neath his right hand
That wrote the tale of Hell,

Drawn tighter as some shameless song,
Some drunkard's futile jest,
Some loud coarse laugh has pealed along
These walls once pure and blest ;

While, speeding to the festive hour,
The abbot's self passed by,
And thought that wanderer's face was sour,
Nor liked his fearless eye,

Nor knew that burning glance of scorn
Would brand with deathless shame,
' Ill-souled, ill-bodied, and ill-born,'¹
His else-forgotten name.

¹ mal del corpo intero
E della mente peggio, e che mal nacque.

Well, there he lies, his revels done,
 The ladder ¹ on his tomb ;
 The Virgin and her holier Son
 Disturbed to make him room.

And Dante sleeps, a lonely man,
 Far off from foe and friend ;
 And He who knows how life began,
 Alone can read its end.

GEMMA DONATI

(The Wife of Dante)

YES, children, there's your father, his very mouth and
 eyes,
 And that grand way he holds his head and all the
 world defies.
 We've often talked about him, so mark him one and
 all,
 And see how Giotto drew him on the Bargello wall.

'Tis like him and not like him, he's changed so much
 since then,
 Though even when I first knew him he was not like
 other men,

¹ The device of the Scala family. The tomb in question, popularly said to be that of 'Dante's Abbot,' stands in front of a fresco of the Madonna, for which it hardly appears to have left sufficient space.

And when he came to woo me he scarcely deigned to smile,
Although his other trouble had been over a good while.

And when we walked together his brow was knit with care ;
Sometimes he seemed forgetful that anyone was there,
Or else he'd talk so strangely about the stars and spheres,
And use such words as surely weren't fit for women's ears.

'His friends,' he said, 'had told him to wive ;' that well might be ;
'On the whole he knew of no one he fancied more than me.'
And I'd half a dozen sisters, perhaps the prettiest ones
Might marry, but what chance had *we* except of turning nuns ?

And so I cried and yielded ; 'twas settled in a week,
The bridegroom being ready and the bride both young and meek ;
He never seemed impatient, although he ne'er seemed loth ;
All bridal jokes went o'er his head ; I had to blush for both !

We stood before the altar ; the maidens, I could see,
Whispered and smiled each other 'they did not envy me !'
The marriage psalms were chanted, the abbot's blessing said,
And he—he might be watching the burial of the dead !

Outside, the street was dazzling, and sweet the lilies
smelt,
And loud the music sounded—I know not what I felt!
He bent and drew my arm in his, and mournfully he
smiled.
I knew he could not love me—he used me like a
child.

I felt so far below him ; my mind I know is small,
And yet what *can* a woman do but frankly give her
all ?
I watched him thinking, musing, as one from far might
see
Some great strong eagle soaring, most distant when
most free.

Once in his sleep he kissed my hand with strange
unwonted zeal,
And murmured ‘ Beatrice!’—it cut my heart like steel !
He woke with disappointed eyes, balked of their dream
divine—
He woke and never noticed that there were tears in
mine.

Ah, little Beatrice ! to whom *her* name was given—
I found it, oh, so hard, to have a rival up in heaven.
An earthly woman might have failed, grown haggard,
dull and old,
The glamour might have passed away, the warmth of
love grown cold.

How could I struggle with her ? I, slave of place and
time,
A poor plain toiling woman, with her, a saint sublime ?

—She with that snowy brow of hers illumed with
 heavenly light,
Mine drawn together with the thought, ‘ How shall we
 sup to-night ? ’

I with a crying baby still tugging at my gown,
Flushed with the heat of marketing, white with the
 dust of town ;
She with her crown of olive, all dewy, fresh and green,
With virgin robe unsoiled and smooth, and face and
 look serene.

Ah, Monna Beatrice, had you but been his bride !
There are some things, a many things, we know not
 till we’ve tried ;
And you, ‘ sweet lady of his dreams, I wonder, ’neath
 this sun
If you could ever have made shift to live as I have
 done ?

Perhaps you might have helped him, or hindered him
 —who knows ?—
From using words, harsh words, that breed disputes
 where’er he goes ;
Perhaps you might have broken down, worn out with
 his unrest.
Six children and an empty purse bring tempers to the
 test !

And you, you never knew him—perhaps he knew not
 you !
Some people go by what we seem, and some by what
 we do.

You never spent a sleepless night for him, or weary
day,
Yet you are more to him, alack ! than I, do what I
may.

And then—I often wonder—suppose you had not
died,
There's that long poem that he wrote and took such
pains to hide !
I know it's all about you ! Now, what would he have
done,
Supposing you had lived and been like me or any
one ?

He has not got it in him to be happy, without doubt,
And when you died you gave him a text to grieve
about ;
But had you lived, I'm certain he'd have fretted all the
same,
Twice melancholy, since he could not give his grief a
name.

Why could he not be satisfied ? Why must he still
contend ?
In this world, if he would not break, a man must
sometimes bend.
Though his unyielding spirit would rather bend than
break,
He might sometimes be gentle for his wife and
children's sake.

Yes, there he stands, superb and grand, disdainful of
mankind,
And there he'll stand for ages when we are left behind,

And men will praise and wonder, and well such praise
may be,
For surely in all Florence is none so great as he !

Too great for me, my children, for happiness too great,
Such men as he are ever made for little men to hate.
I feel it with reluctant pride even when he grieves me
most,
I would not have him otherwise, though all my life
were crost.

I would not have the sun bedimmed for dazzling of
my eye ;
Because the Arno drowned my friend, I would not have
it dry ;
And when the thunder rolls and roars amid the
Apennines,
I would not have the storm clouds checked for beating
down my vines.

Nay, brighter still and bolder shine forth, thou kingly
sun !
With swifter, fuller current, O yellow river, run !
Break, thou majestic storm ! and thou, great poet, live
thy life,
Though I be scarce remembered, as thy scorned,
unworthy wife !

TARQUIN AND THE SIBYL

'Tis the weird woman—is she young or old ?
 Her changeful face, half shadowed by the fold
 Of her enwrapping veil, has power to charm
 With enigmatic beauty that outstrips
 Young maiden loveliness ; within her arm
 Nine sacred rolls are held ; she moves her lips
 In soft and searching tones. ‘ These books I bring.
 Pay me my price, and they are thine, O king ! ’

He looks half wistful, then he shrinks away,
 Half 'feared, half fascinated 'neath the sway
 Of those deep eyes, that low-pitched voice, that
 thrills,
 O'ermastering in its softness ; he would fain
 She ne'er had come ; he knows not what he wills ;
 To lose were sore, but awful were the gain—
 Who knows what magic presences may lurk
 Within the volumes, what strange powers at work ?

King though he be, and proud among the proud,
 A hesitating trouble, like a cloud,
 Comes o'er him, and with stammering lips he cries,
 ‘ Depart, weird sister ; nay, in peace depart.
 Would I were richer ! happy he who buys
 And reads the mysteries of thy hidden art !
 For me——’ She turned without a word and went,
 And one grave farewell look on him she bent.

'Twas then the spring in loveliest Italy,
 Blue lay the olive woods beneath the sky,
 And curling soft towards heaven a smoke of blue
 Went up amid the hills as evening fell.
 None told the guilty king, and yet he knew
 Three mighty books were burning ; many a spell
 Was lost for ever to the world ! He saw
 And nothing spake, and all were mute with awe.

The April hours glide swiftly into May,
 And unobserved her violets slip away.
 Narcissus passed, forgotten when the rose
 Unfolded, blushing to th' enamoured choir
 Of southern nightingales ; pomegranate-glows
 Flush in the orchards ; like a hidden fire
 In alabaster lamps of soft perfume,
 The glorious glossy-leaved magnolias bloom.

The hot and golden harvest months are here,
 The grapes are swelling, ripe, no leaf yet sere ;
 And in his portico of marble fair,
 Sun-proof, where every wandering mountain breeze
 Is caught and captured, while the hot noon's glare
 Lies dancing, dazzling, o'er the far-off seas,
 The king, half slumbering, hears a footfall near,
 So soft, so soft, and yet 'tis fraught with fear !

Once more she stands before him. Is she stern,
 Or is there lurking patience, swift to turn
 To kindness in her gaze ? Her speech is low
 But cold and clear, as in some cavern chill
 Falls the translucent stream that once was snow,
 And those six books she proffers, an he will :
 ' Once more, O king ! the treasure may be thine.
 The price for six I ask once claimed for nine !

Oh, will he seize the moment ? It will fly
Faster than flitting shadows, that now lie
Athwart his marble floor, and straightway shift
As Sol slopes westward ! Thrice he reckons o'er
His treasured gold, thrice gazes at the gift
That may be his, or now, or never more.
It may not be. The words can ne'er be said.
He signs refusal, mutely, with his head !

She goes, she looks not back, but scorn and pain
In all her graceful motions seem to reign ;
As when a ruffled swan with plumes displayed,
And stately, angry head, offended glides
Far down the stream, and seeks the alders' shade,
And 'mid the reeds her slighted splendour hides,
So she departs, and ere the stars are high,
Once more that pyre smokes upward to the sky !

And swift the summer roses fade, and lo !
The autumn apples, each a sunset glow
Of streaky red and gold, are safely stored.
The jolly vintage songs no more resound ;
Snow lies upon the hills, the squirrel's hoard
Is full, the boughs are bare, and bare the ground ;
The crackling firewood flames, the caldron steams,
Kissed by those lambent fires with brazen gleams.

Beside the little Lares on the hearth
The king sits mute, with eyes cast down to earth.
Something is gone from life, without a name,
Some glory might have been that ne'er will be !
A voice far better than the voice of Fame
Says, 'All thy greatness, in default of me,
Is stunted, pitiful ; thyself dost seem
A petty fragment of thy youthful dream !'

His face is proud, but bitter is its mood ;
Grand-eyed Benevolence, that joys in good,
Has left it vacant for the haunting throng
Of sour suspicions, scarce acknowledged stings
Of vain regrets, that still lament and long
For greatness on irrevocable wings
For ever flown. See where his idle hand
Writes in the ashes with a burnt-out brand !

Once more that awful presence comes to him,
And looms gigantic in the firelight dim !
She cannot smile ; you rather feel than hear
The words that pass her lips, as once, once more,
Three books she brings, and mutters words of fear.
' Behold these books, the last of all my store ;
Take them, or leave them, for the price of nine.
Never, or now ; no other chance is thine ! '

He looks afar : Night's chariot o'er the land
Is mounting fast ; anear, the burning brand
Is fading ashy grey ; perplexed, he draws
His fingers o'er his beard—the youthful hue
Is almost lost in silver. Will she pause ?
Even now her looks the old demand renew.
He trembles, and assents ; the price is told—
The books are his, and hers the hoarded gold.

What gold could buy them ? what is wisdom's fee ?
Or who could tell the greatness, yet to be,
Of world-commanding Rome, the price could guess
Of sacred treasures hidden in the deep
Of her wise heart through all the stormy stress
Wherein she grew majestic, strong to reap
The harvest of all nations, and to tread
Where nought shall e'er efface her footprints dread ?

But ah ! those sacred books are lost and gone.
Yet thou, dread Sibyl, awful and alone,
Art with us, Opportunity thy name !
Rich are thy gifts to youth, nor dearly bought ;
Thou comest our maturer age to shame,
But patient still ! . . . Alas ! if still untaught,
We reach old age, too thankful then to buy
Thy least last gifts, how dearly, ere we die !

A FLEMISH MADONNA

I SEE her now, the girl of Ghent,
That fetched the amber ale :
A modest creature, and content,
Yet wistful, tired, and pale.

The inn beside the market-place
Where ceaseless footsteps fell,
Seemed scarce to suit the dreamy face
Of her who served so well.

Those auburn locks, that brow so white,
Told sweeter tales to us ;
The Virgin Mother rose to sight—
Vandyck had seen her thus !

A woman gentle, steadfast, kind,
A calm and duteous heart,
That keeps her daily work in mind,
Yet lives a life apart.

O Mother of true motherhood !
Each mother's son in thee
Has seen his own reflected mood,
The thing he fain would see !

And now thou com'st from fervent Spain,
A dark-eyed face, that glows
With love that borders hard on pain,
So passionate its throes !

A mother-muse, in loftiest thought,
To Michael Angelo ;
To Giotto with a grace untaught—
The way the lilies grow ;

To Raphael like a soul divine,
Come down to earthly climes ;
To Titian like a matron fine,
That thinks of heaven sometimes !

We know thou wert not one of these ;
Nor yet the Jewish maid
Whom even to-day the traveller sees
With locks in glittering braid.

We know not thou wert fair to see,
Thy shape, thy look, thy dress :
What needs it, when each thought of thee
Breathes love and loveliness ?

'Tis well that meek-eyed face, that bent
O'er God in manhood shrined,
Should pass away from earth, content
To leave no trace behind :

What needs it, when each thought of thee
Round every woman flings
A veil of tender poetry,
That brightens where it clings ?

The maiden 'twixt her flowers and prayers,
With angels gliding near ;
The mother 'midst her happy cares,
Bold hope and shadowy fear ;

The mourner as she weeps and yearns ;
The saint that waits her call—
We see them one and all by turns,
And thee amid them all !

There's none so mean in mortal sight,
There's none so great or high,
But gains from thee some borrowed light,
' Ancilla Domini ! '

*IN THE CHURCHYARD OF OVER
DENTON, CUMBERLAND*

(THE GRAVE OF THE PROTOTYPE OF MEG MERRILIES)

THEY laid her here, the gipsy wife,
Her hundred years all told at length,
Her hundred years of border strife
And cunning aptly matched with strength.

Those old old eyes, those practised ears,
How oft they'd gazed 'mid starlight still,
Or heard the horseman's trot, that clears
The burn and dashes up the hill !

How many a deed without a name
Those eyes had watched, or hands had wrought !
And was it pride she felt, or shame,
When death at last her summons brought ?

How strange to watch the morning light
Glint through yon stony mullion¹ small,
With nought to do from morn till night
But watch the sunbeams on the wall !

Or gaze upon the far-off hill,
And think ' No more my foot may go,
Wild as the breeze, where'er I will—
Oh, never moe ! ah, never moe !

' And they 'll forget me when I 'm gone ?
Not yet ! By many a glowing peat,
On many a moorland pathway lone,
' Neath suns that blaze, or rains that beat,

' The shepherd to his boys will tell
My name, my story, half in boast,
Half terror ; and the heathery fell
Will, sure, be haunted by my ghost.

' For what is heaven ? The endless sky
That stretches wide above our head !
And who is God ? Can such as I
Who missed Him living, find Him, dead ?

' I know not. Only this I know :
I've loved the hills, I've loved the sun ;
To hear the winds how wild they blow,
To see the streams how fast they run ;

¹ In the house still shown at Gilsland.

‘To feel the blood within my veins,
 And all my limbs alive and warm ;
 I’ve toiled my toil, I’ve borne my pains,
 I’ve faced the blast, I’ve braved the storm.

‘And now, old friends, or haply foes,
 O yet a while remember me !
 Before I go where each man goes
 Look on my face, that I may be

‘Alive within your memory still,
 And walk with you by night and day,
 And ford the stream, or climb the hill ;
 And sometimes think of me, and say :

‘“She lived indeed, the gipsy wife,
 Was warm to love, and hot to hate ;
 A hundred years of such a life
 Are seldom borne thro’ kirkyard gate.”

‘Good-bye, O blessed air and sun !
 Good-bye, my friends, for I must go.
 I do not leave behind me one
 Who knows the half of what I know ;

‘Old stories of the country side,
 And shapes that with my brain will die,
 And many a desperate midnight ride
 O’er moors beneath a lowering sky ;

‘And secrets strange of death and birth,
 And whispers that I’ve told to none.
 Ah ! when you lay me in the earth
 You bury not myself alone,

‘ But words and deeds long past and gone,
 The hands my hand has held and pressed,
 The eyes my eyes have looked upon,
 The brows once pillowed on my breast ;

‘ I leave you to a tamer world—
 The things that have been are no more.
 Like some old toothless mastiff, curled
 In slumber by the farmhouse door,

‘ That barely growls himself awake,
 And turns himself to sleep anew :
 Such are your times ! It cannot break
 My heart to bid such times adieu.

‘ My world is gone, then wherefore stay ?
 Farewell ! and lay me down alone,
 And carve, when I have past away,
 These words upon my kirkyard stone :

*‘ What once I was, some may relate ;
 What I am now, is each one’s fate ;
 What I shall be, none may explain
 Till He who called, calls again.¹*

‘ But ah ’ (she said), ‘ the night is mirk,
 Up, up, my merry men, and ride !
 A darksome night befits our work ; ’
 And forth she flung her arms and died.

¹ The actual inscription over the grave of Margaret Carrick.
 If care be not taken it will soon be illegible.

A MODERN RACHEL

SOBBING, sobbing all the day
 Where my baby lies . . .
 What ! you bid me come away,
 You, the wise ?
 You that never knew my pain,
 You to talk to me !
 Go, and turn your books again—
 Let me be !

Now I may not plant the Cross
 O'er my child in death,
 Now I mourn a double loss—
 Love and faith.
 You have taught me, not in vain,

Hope I never must
 More to see my child again—
 She is dust !
 And the thing you called a soul
 Gone, for ever gone !
 Fused and blended with the whole,
 All—and none !
 Unsubstantial and unknown,
 Featureless and pale,
 Not my child, my very own,
 Passed within the veil !

Once the Babe of Bethlehem spake
From His mother's knee :
'Hallow childhood for My sake,
Learn of Me,'
Now, mere man, his glances faint
Bring nor hope nor aid ;
'Hero, Thinker, Martyr, Saint'—
All is said !

From the cross that wounded Face
Bendeth in its pain,
But it brings no strength nor grace,
Bruised in vain !
And in vain the mother weeps,
As I weep to-day,
While my heart from blackest deeps
Dares not pray !

Well, I'll to the world again !
What is left beside ?
Silken gown and golden chain
All my pride !
And I'll try and never think
Tiny hands of old
Used to thread each shining link . . .
—Gold is gold !

Nor what baby wakefulness
Through the open door
Listened for my rustling dress . . .
Hush ! no more !
All things round me stab and dart,
Every word cuts deep ;
Can you mend a broken heart ?
Go, and let me weep !

JUDAS' KISS

(Friend, wherefore art thou come?)

AND didst Thou know even this,
The mockery of a simulated good ?
The parody of love in Judas' kiss ?
The thorn-crown wet with blood ?

Sweet blessings given to men
That turned to curses when they smiled on Thee ?
Thou hadst in truth Thy loyal homage when
Those soldiers bowed the knee !

And Thou, ah, Thou dost know
The bitter draught that sweetest pleasure yields,
The exquisite sharp pain that oft doth grow
In fairest-blooming fields !

The all but heavenly shapes
That devils don, the gifts they seem to bear,
The human counterfeit in brutish apes,
The greed that mimics prayer !

Hands swift to grasp at gain,
The eager motion of their loveless clutch,
The keen unmelting eye, self-centred brain,
The uncaressing touch ;

All soulless, loveless forms,
The flatterer's mask above the cynic's leer,
The whited sepulchre o'er bones and worms,
The mourner's venal tear ;

Deceit in friendship's guise ;
How seeming Reverence lies in wait to slay,
How Love itself protests and then denies,
How all men turn away !

Thou know'st those bitter hours
When music bids the torturing moments speed,
And though our fragrant heads be crowned with
flowers,
The thorn-pricks throb and bleed ;

The purple robe of praise,
Lip-homage that deceives not nor delights,
The voice of well-paid friendship that betrays,
The glance that banes and blights !

Thou know'st us, when we turn
From salt sea-water brought in cup of gold,
One moment's hope held out to lips that burn,
Then . . all things as of old !

And can we bear for Thee
This would-be happiness, that keenest pain,
The husks of joys that never are to be,
This gibbering phantom-train ?

Fair clouds that slip away
In shapeless wreaths of falsehood ; mirrored bliss,
Cold, flat, and heartless, while the world to-day
Still gives her Judas' kiss,

THE BLIND BEGGAR AT JERICHO.

AND wert thou, Love, so near me then ?
 I heard Thy name on lips of men,
 I felt the crowd, the laden air—
 I knew that something great was there.

The thickly trampling feet I heard,
 And robes that brushed, and limbs that stirred :
 The dust upon my lips lay dry,—
 The crowd thronged on : *Thou* passedst by !

And I could see no face, no form :
 I felt the sun above me warm ;
 I asked—I know not whom—to say
Who passes, mid that throng to-day ?

‘ Jesus ! ’ I cried, nor would forbear ;
 ‘ Thou Son of David, hear my prayer ; ’
 And yet I never thought that He
 Would stop, would call, would speak to me.

Men led me—drew me—to His side :
 I felt the buzzing crowd divide ;
 Then came a voice I could not dread—
 ‘ What wilt thou I should do ? ’ it said.

‘ Oh, might I, Lord, receive my sight ! ’—
 He spake one word, and all was light !
 A dazzling glow, that on my brain
 Rushed like a golden shower of rain !

Ay, there were men there ! that I knew,
A shifting scene of every hue ;
I *saw* them not : I could but see
Thy face, O Love, bent down to me !

I thought it dread at first, and stern :
And then it seemed to brood and yearn
As if a far-off world of pain
And pity did each thought enchain ;

And then it seemed divinely high,
Triumphant e'en in agony,
As one who, wounded (not laid low),
Towers grandly o'er a writhing foe.

One moment, and methought those Eyes
Encompassed all things 'neath the skies ;
The next, they looked on me—on me,
As if no other soul could be !

I could not fear, He seemed so meek ;
So awful, then, I durst not speak ;
I could not smile, so sad He seemed ;
Nor weep—that Face so strangely beamed !

I've looked upon the world since then—
Its crowded life of things and men,
Its hills, its trees, its streams, its sky,
Its beasts that roam, its birds that fly ;

The beauty, beauty, streaming in
Athwart deformity and sin,
The sunlight, with its golden loan
Of glory to each stock and stone :

I've looked upon the world at last
With hungry eyes that break their fast ;
And things too small for others' care
To me are wonderful and fair.

But oh ! that moment, first and best,
That look of His ! . . . within my breast
'Tis hoarded like a death-bed kiss,
Or lover's keenest, earliest bliss.

The very earth on which He trod
Is holy, as an altar-sod
Where sacred fires were lit of old
Ere temples rose that flashed with gold.

How oft with staff and groping hands
I've felt my way through darkened lands,
Nor knew His footsteps (though divine)
Were treading very earth like mine !

How oft I've felt the sunbeam glow,
Nor knew its glory lit His brow !—
How oft I've felt the nightly air,
Nor thought 'twas laden with His prayer !

O Love—so near and yet unknown !
O Face,—a man's face, like our own !
And wert Thou then so close, . . . and I
Sat begging for a crust hard by ?

ST. PAUL AT ROME

WHAT did they think of thee,
Those bold, rough mates, like half-tamed beasts of
prey?

Did it seem long to watch thee, wearily,
Some sultry, Roman day,

Beneath the dog-star's beat—
When every breath of air seemed thunder-bound,
Quivering, the hazy distance, and the ground
Hot iron to their feet?

And did they, at thy side,
Begrudge the guard-room dice, its threadbare jest,
And count the flies upon the wall, and chide
The sun, slow-creeping west?

Or bid time faster speed
With rude street-ballads and blasphemous lays,
Some fickle Lalage's or Chloe's praise,
Some god's flagitious deed?

And did they miss in thee
The suppliant's flattery, coin-secreting palm?
Could nothing stir thee—nothing break that calm
So far from apathy?

Or did they mark, meanwhile,
Strange tides of feeling sweep across thy face—
A wondrous look, a self-awakened smile
That seemed to fill the space

Round thee with sudden light,
An almost fearful sense of somewhat there
Whose very touchlessness seemed full of might,
A glory in the air ?

Some new ecstatic joy
That circled round thee like a brilliant charm ?
—Ay, one might sit beside thee, touch thine arm,
Nor once that spell destroy.

'Twas something felt, not known—
No outward-pulsing light men's eyes to blind !
It seemed like nothing, yet it drew the mind
And reigned as from a throne,

In splendour bright and bold,
That glowed and burnt like leaping flame on high,
That fed on pain, and flung it to the sky
In sheets of quivering gold !

And didst thou from thy trance
Wake with a smile—twin-brother to a sigh—
Then turn and mark the dazed, bewildered glance
Of some dull soldier's eye ;

And bend on him a gaze
So full of power and tenderness and prayer,
It well might seem that freedom blessed thy days,
And he the prisoner were ?

A look, now full of pain,
And now rebuke, now yearning tenderness ;
A voice that dared not from reproof abstain,
Yet only longed to bless !

And when the hour drew nigh
That brings the evening freshness and repose,
While Tiber's sand-stained waves are touched with rose
Caught from the glowing sky,

That sends from shop and stall
The Forum's busy folk to wife and home,
Proclaiming holiday to bustling Rome,
While long-stretched shadows fall,

And couch and banquet bright
Gleam to the fireflies and the piercing stars,
And wine comes forth in cool, long-buried jars
To glad the thirsty night,

And chaplets crown the head,
And girls' white fingers o'er the flute-stops move,
And songs are heard beneath the vine-wreath shed,
And mirth emboldens love,

And night unlocks the chain
That bound the sentry to his day-long care,
And sends him forth to meet the world again
And breathe the golden air,

Ah! did he guess, even he—
Though dimly, faintly, what he left behind,
Or was his soul but conscious as the blind
Of light they cannot see?

And has he borne away
Somewhat that shrinks a little more from ill,
Some dubious longing for a better way,
Some added strength of will?

Be sure that o'er his brain
There never flashed the thought of days like ours,
Nor coming men to whom that prisoner's chain
Would seem more fair than flowers !

O for one hour with thee,
Triumphant sufferer, laughing-stock sublime,
Fool for Christ's sake, yet wisest of thy time,
And freer than the free !

Ah, foolish souls ! ye cry
For blessings that are yours *because* denied !
Were Paul himself this moment at your side
He were not half so nigh.

The moment and the hour
Would make th' eternal life and spirit dim ;
Himself would stand between ourselves and him,
His weakness veil his power.

But touch that hand, and see
It waves no longer from Antonia's height,
Beckons no more, nor works with healing might :
'Tis flesh and blood, like thee !

The spirit fades away ;
What boots the rest ? Who takes a part for all ?
Nay, give thou thanks—the true, th' undying Paul
Is thine, is ours, to-day !

CHRISTMAS EVE AT BEMERTON, 1885

ERE the red sunset of this Christmas Eve
 Have turned to starlit grey,
 While fair white hands for font and pillar weave
 The thorn-rich holly spray,
 O come beneath this low brown porch, to kneel
 Where, decked, yon altar stands !
 A holy spot it is ; there faith and zeal
 Still throng from far-off lands.

An altar, and beneath, the sacred place
 Where Herbert's grave was made ;
 But now, the empty grave retains no trace
 To mark where he was laid.
 'Tis well, 'tis like himself, to shrink and flee
 From human touch and ken ;
 ' Nor one alone, but every land must be
 The tomb of famous men.'

Yes, fame was his, a fame with wider wings
 Than e'er the Greek ¹ had guessed,
 That bore him, where the nightingale ne'er sings,
 Far toward the fruitful west,
 There, in New England homesteads, where the sky
 Knows other stars than these,
 Which rose so sweetly to their Poet's eye
 Above his cherished trees ;

There where the daisy blooms not, and the woods
 Blaze brighter gold and red,
 And vaster mountains rise, and mightier floods
 Roar towards the ocean-bed,

¹ Thucyd, ii. 43 ; Pericles' Funeral Oration.

And human skill seems dowered with newer gifts,
And, striding on apace,
The Future darkly smiles, as Time half lifts
The mantle from her face ;

There, in that full, shrewd world, where all men throng
And hurry towards success,
They prize him, as men prize an old-world song,
A mother's folded tress.
His musings at still eve, or watchful morn,
Some tone in silence heard,
Some fireside thought within his bosom born,
Some voice of twittering bird,

Some angel flitting by him as he knelt,
Heaven's hand upon his pen :
God knows how wondrously these things are felt
By strangers—fellow-men !
God knows how great the loss if petty strife,
Mean cares, had knit his brow ;
If one degrading thought had marred that life,
We all were poorer now !

Ah ! 'tis not fame alone, loud-voiced applause,
By Genius' ear disdained,
But something tenderer, subtler far, that draws
In stillness unprofaned
Soul close to soul, the yearnings of to-day
To each immortal cry,
Sent up to heaven from regions far away
Or ages long gone by.

And he is dead, nor leaves behind, we deem,
Of all he called his own
But church and house and garden by the stream,
And some few pages brown !

But oh ! rich-fancying brain, and lofty soul,
If this small part of thee
Can throb, like life itself, 'twixt pole and pole
Through ages as they flee,
O who can set a limit, who define
Thy being and its powers,
The wondrous wealth that may even now be thine,
That one day may be ours?

The strange quick sympathy, the piercing view,
The widespread complex life,
The old dear being dowered with functions new,
The death of inward strife,
Nearness to God ; His beauty ever fresh
In swelling waves of light ;
Thou saw'st it dimly, through thy veil of flesh,
But *how* . . . this Christmas night ?

.
Farewell, farewell ! thy stream is all aglow
With sunset, and the spire of Salisbury fair
Points upward, like thy finger, and we go
Helped, haply, by thy prayer.

*SEA-GULLS AT RISEHOLME,
NEAR LINCOLN*

APRIL 1881.

WILD white creatures, what do ye here,
Circling about on our inland mere ?
Strange to you are these budding trees,
The daffodils swaying, the young lambs playing,
The rooks' nests swinging, the blackbirds singing,
All in the keen north-eastern breeze.

Wild white creatures, the storm-wind's daughters,
Bred like foam of the restless waters,

What are the tidings from far ye bring?
What weird message, what baleful presage?
Wingèd strangers, what wars, what dangers
Come to trouble our English spring?

'Wildly, wildly from far we flee,
From things we hear and things we see!
From north and south, o'er waste and flood,
Come shrieks and crying and stifled sighing,
Low-breathed suspicion, loud-voiced sedition,
And all the earth seems a field of blood!

'Amid a nation's shuddering dread
The great one¹ of the north lies dead;
All faces look at every face,
Each watches each, none hazards speech,
A glance betrays and a whisper slays,
And Death's enthroned in the highest place.

'Blackness and dimness everywhere!
The very snow melts redly there;
No inch of ground but may mark a grave!
No woman's heart, no woman's eye,
But may face a fiercer agony
Than manliest natures dare to brave.'

Wild white creatures, ye whirl apace,
Restless as spirits shut out from grace,
Troubling the peace of our quiet days;
Say, are there souls as wild as you
Fluttering o'er earth, a vagrant crew
Only beheld by spirit-gaze?

¹ The Czar, assassinated March 13, 1881.

‘Wildly, wildly, we fly from far,
Where mother-earth seems with herself at war
And buries the brood her bosom bred ;¹
Crash upon crash and wall on wall,
Churches and houses and cities fall,
And the very living with fear are dead.

‘Mother and baby with arms entwined,
Lovers whom wedlock will never bind,
Misers whose gold can no funeral buy,
Bedridden women with hollow cheeks
Who have called on Death for weeks and weeks,
And now must die as the healthy die !’

Out, alas ! for man’s works and ways !
Oh, for his hopes, his plans, his praise,
Scattered all by one sudden blow !
As an ant-hill by one footfall crushed,
As a cobweb from a doorway brushed,
As a bird’s nest by one blast laid low !

Does she care for our petty state,
This giant-limbed Titanic Fate ?
She moves, and our hopes are earthward flung,
As in a cornfield a man might walk,
Beat down as he went each crackling stalk,
And the field-mouse’ nest and its fostered young.

On she goes with o’erpowering stride,
Now crushing, now sparing our petty pride.
—Envy us ? No ! for her scorn is great.
Does she think of us men at all ?
The world is so large, and we too small
Even to raise a smile on the lips of Fate.

¹ Earthquake at Chios, 1881.

Did she care when the flames leapt high,¹
Where joy and music even now were nigh,
For youth and beauty and love and mirth
All turned to ashes in one brief night?
Ah, no! the stars shone just as bright,
And the wavelets laughed as they kissed the earth.

Wild white sea-gulls, ye wheel and fly,
Like haunting memories that hover nigh
The weary body till all is done—
All that the master-will ordains,
Which yields not yet to mortal pains
Till its work be ended at birth begun.

Ye may not sink on the waters deep,
But still your eddying motion keep,
Borne up and on by your inner will:
And one now ² lies on his dying bed
The wings of whose spirit are still outspread,
And the long, long life keeps pulsing still.

Wild white creatures, your wings have flown
O'er many a league of ocean lone,
O'er many a city, and many a stream;
But what are your wanderings, your wondrous flight,
To the thoughts that come in sleepless nights
Round such a pillow, in firelight's gleam?

Slowly, slowly the life-lamp dies,
Slowly, strangely before him rise
Thoughts of the boy, the man, erewhile,
—Half-fledged ambition, the butt of scorn,
Hopes foredoomed to die unborn,
Or hopes fulfilled with ironic smile.

¹ Theatre at Nice.

² Lord Beaconsfield, died April 19, 1881.

Faces of friend and foe are there,
The hustings' clamour that taints the air,
The Senate's careless sneer or frown ;
The feverish beat of a heart that climbs,
While the ladder trembles and sways at times,
And who gains not the height is soon dragged
down.

Fashion and flattery and sugared lies,
And the magical mischief of women's eyes,
Diamonds glittering and court attire,
Eastern splendour and Western might,
The Arab steed with its gallop light,
And the iron chariot's breath of fire ;

Men and nations beneath his hand ;
His words sped on from land to land,
While every beggar has learnt his face ;
His finger on the great machine
—What eye so quick, what brain so keen
That shudders not as it turns apace ?

Not wholly master of his Fate
In lowly or in high estate,
The slave of Fate he ne'er would be ;
He wrestled with reluctant Doom,
Victorious in the night of gloom,
Though halting henceforth on his knee.

O giant Fate, thou shadowy Power !
Not thou, not thou in our death-bed hour
Wilt seem most stern to human sight !
There stands beside man's pillow still
A shape more fearful—his own Freewill
That chose the evil or loved the right.

Not shock of earthquake nor monarch's fall
Nor breath of fire can the heart appal,
Or shake man's spirit on his throne,
Like the memory of one hour of sin :
Our strength, our weakness lies within,
With God and with ourselves alone !

*THREE MONTHS AFTER A
FUNERAL*

Ay, thou art dead, I know it well ; have seen
The churchyard sods above thee, flushed with green
By last week's summer-rain, that dashed the flowers
Of tarnished hawthorn, and displumed the bowers
Of tossing lilacs, *thine*, not long ago !
Yes, thou art gone ! I know it ; well I know.

Oft in some bustling street, in twilight drear,
When lamps are lit, and thoughts of home grow dear,
There gleams amid the throng, 'twixt shade and
shine,
A form, a face, I fain would think it *thine* !
Half cheated, yet half conscious of the cheat,
I gaze awhile in willing self-deceit.

Oft in the church, when tenderest tones implore
Help for the sad and sick, I fly once more
To thy sick bed ; then start with almost pain
To think thou ne'er wilt need our prayers again.
We prayed for thee so often, can it be
We ne'er may ask one boon of Heaven for thee ?

Oft when some tale, some jest, brings back the spell
 Of our old mirthful days, I run to tell
 The freshly sparkling story, that perchance
 May make those eyes of thine grow bright and dance ;
 And then—my foot already on the stair—
 The mirth grows leaden—for thou art not there !

Men tell of joy in heaven, that 'better land :'
 That heaven is bliss I well can understand ;
 And now and then I catch a glimpse, I see
 Something, so glorious !—is that glimpse of thee ?
 But oh ! the glove we found in yonder drawer,
 Thy pen, thy cloak—and are they thine no more ?

Dost thou not care at all, though on the shelf
 Lie books of thine that almost seemed thyself ?
 Thy daily walk, the horse thy hands have fed,
 All nothing to thee now ? Thy friendly bed,
 Strange as an inn's, and strange the door-key bright,
 Turned by thy hand so oft at morn and night !

Feel'st thou no pain when heedless fingers spoil
 Some work, for days and years thy darling toil ?
 Hadst thou no pleasure when the prize was won
 By him, at once thy pupil and thy son ?
 —Some music brings thee back in every tone ;
 Thy very voice was hardly more thine own.

Oh, what is Time ? Though wrinkles line our brow,
 The days of youth are living, breathing now :
 The smile thou gav'st me twenty years ago
 Is thine, is mine ; love's fountain ne'er runs low.
 Ourselves are *all* our moments : could we say
 Man were the same with any part away ?

So rich, so full, thy life and love, they flowed
 Beyond our sense of need ; thy kindness glowed
 With such redundant warmth, it lent its heat
 Even to the senseless hearthstone at our feet.
 Now, when the fire is dead, we fain would find,
 Hid in the stone, some lingering warmth behind.

So, gathering pleasure from the heart of pain,
 We view thy chair, thy books, and live again
 Those days whose sweetness was not half explored,
 Those close-packed memories, an undying hoard
 Of many-sided love and wit and mirth,
 And feel that, though in heaven, thou'rt still on earth.

Unwearied now, unpained, without distress,
 Thy Presence comes, to beautify and bless
 Both little things and great, to share the smile
 Some trifle waked, bid song or verse beguile
 Some dull and rainy hour, with graceful play
 To seize and point the 'humours' of the day.

Death cannot touch thee, and Eternity
 Enfolds thee now beneath her boundless sky !
 Yet in the world of sense thou hast thy part :
 We feel the beatings of thy human heart,
 Thy memory hovers o'er the meanest things,
 And Hope lies hidden there with half-fledged wings.

OXFORD : *December 9, 1881.*

MISUNDERSTOOD

WHEN you were born, my darling,
 When you were born,
 Did some kind sprite, beholding
 Our life forlorn,
 Say, 'Give me a mortal body,
 Hands, eyes, and brain,
 That I may go and succour
 This world's sad pain ?'

When thus you spake, my darling,
 When thus you spake,
 Did some great Voice in heaven
 This answer make :
 'You *shall* go down to succour
 The sad on earth,
 But none shall know or prize you,
 Even from your birth.'

When you were born, my darling,
 When you were born,
 No cannon's voice, nor trumpet's,
 Awoke the morn.
 No crown, no wreath awaited
 Your baby brow ;
 You glided in among us
 No one knows how.

When you grew up, my darling,
 When up you grew,
 None praised you and none flattered—
 Your friends were few ;

Your face it had no beauty,
No sparkle in your eye ;
The souls you loved and watched for,
Oft passed you by.

When you went forth, my darling,
When you went forth,
Some pitied you, some scorned you,
None guessed your worth.
A dumb and awkward creature,
No wit, no grace,
No language to interpret
The mute, grave face !

And thus you lived, my darling,
You lived even thus,
Nought on yourself bestowing,
And all on us !
So much performed of kindness,
And nought professed,
From you men looked for nothing,
And found—the best !

Must such things be, my darling ?
Must such things be ?
Must you still live in prison,
And ne'er be free ?
When every shallow nature
Some vent has found,
Must your deep soul be silent,
And choked, and bound ?

Yes, I could bear, my darling,
Yes, I could bear,
That some should never fathom
The greatness there,

But grand and tender spirits,
 So like your own,
 Must you be close beside them,
 And still unknown ?

The task is hard, my darling,
 Hard is the task,
 To walk amid our brethren
 Beneath a mask ;
 To be the very hero
 Men praise in books,
 Yet scarce seem fit to merit
 Their friendly looks.

Yet, on your way, my darling,
 Still on your way,
 You go, in steadfast patience,
 Day after day ;
 Not for yourself, but others,
 Perplexed at times
 With this life's sins and sorrows,
 Mistakes, and crimes.

But when you die, my darling,
 But when you die,
 Some blessed saint that haply
 Once passed you by
 Shall meet you with the glory
 Fresh on your brow,
 And say, ' Sweet soul, forgive me,
 I know thee now.'

IN THE TWILIGHT

THE damp grey mist came creeping round,
 Slow dropped the coppice trees,
 The half-thawed roadside, mud-embrowned,
 Seemed doubtful where to freeze.

Dark mountains yield to lonely feet
 Strange echoes, late at e'en,
 But nought so lonely as a street
 Where ne'er a face is seen !

A colley came and gazed at me,
 In sober black and tan ;
 He looked so keen, he seemed to be
 As wise as many a man.

Strange creature, with the kindly eyes !
 Oh ! couldst thou speak, wouldst say,
 'Of man's and nature's sympathies
 How barren seems to-day !'

I almost think some wistful soul
 That once wore human dress
 Peeps through thy roughness, to console
 This moment's loneliness.

Thou dear dumb kinsman, would that I
 But half a word could win,
 Beneath this grey forbidding sky,
 To warm my heart within !

Perhaps thou once wert cold and hard,
A man too like a brute ;
Thy penance now of speech debarred,
To feel, and yet be mute !

Perhaps thy time is still to come ;
And oh, the happy day,
When that warm heart, no longer dumb,
Shall give its kindness play !

Oh, what a friend we've lost in thee !
And happy, sure, his lot,
Who'll know thee as thou then wilt be,
This four-legged life forgot !

Howe'er it be, that look of thine,
Seemed like dumb nature's gaze,
Some heart that fain would speak to mine,
Though mute for countless days.

A speechless love, a yearning pain ;
Blind groping hopes unborn ;
The stirring in the sleeper's brain
That just precedes the morn.

RESERVE

It must be so, and we must bear it ;
Our hearts are feeling all you feel,
Yet you and we shall never share it,
For speech was lent us, to conceal . . . !

Your story round your eyes is written
But never from your lips will flow ;
The heart that has been bruised and smitten
Is jealous o'er its hoarded woe.

When from your chamber you descended
A thrill shot every spirit through,
But all talked on, and none attended,
And all because they cared for you !

Yet when we saw your face undaunted,
And heard your accents self-possessed,
It seemed as if a chamber haunted
Were exorcised in every breast.

The ghosts of all your past so dreary
Were gone, and daylight pure let in !
But then again your face grew weary—
You laughed. Was weariness a sin ?

And will those ghosts come back at even ?
And may we ne'er at nightfall say,
Just as the minster tolls eleven,
' Dear friend, I'll watch with you till day ? '

' Why *should* we watch ? ' you straight would answer,
' The fire burns bright, the marble gleams ;
From yon gilt frame that sprightly dancer
Will soon be whirling through my dreams. '

What can we say (though roof and rafter
Is rocking with the rising blast)
But say good night, amid your laughter
And leave you to your haunted past ?

And yet, dear friend, ere slumber win us
We'll send the angel of our prayer,
Conjured by all the love within us,
To have you in his nightly care.

You will not let us stay to cheer you,
'Gainst him you cannot bar the door ;
And thus, unseen, our love is near you,
Though shadows walk and tempests roar.

SYMPATHY

To see so much, so much to feel,
Yet keep a tearless eye,
Nor let one word our tongue unseal,
Can this be sympathy ?

To watch the deepening lines of pain,
The early whitening hair,
The sufferer bowed beneath a chain
Which none can help to bear,

To feel where all is hardly borne,
Our pity harder still,
To know her spirit so forlorn
Nor recognise its ill,

To see it quiver at a tone
And shrink beneath a glance
So sadly, loftily alone,
No laughing-stock of chance,

To know it craves a brother's hand,
Yet winces at a touch,
Not kindest souls can understand
How little is too much !

To think how often times must come,
A sad heart's overflow,
When walls are deaf and fire-light dumb,
And friends can never know,

To mark the brave and cheerful brow,
The morning eye so bright,
The soul that ne'er will tell us how
She wrestled in the night,

To wish and wish, nor ever dare
To pity or to praise,
Nor own such courage helped us bear
The burden of our days,

For very warmth of heart seem cold,
Fling laughter o'er a sigh,
Clothe love itself in stoic's mould—
Yet this is sympathy.

‘ ‘ *THERE SHALL BE NO MORE PAIN* ’

No pain ! Strange quickener as thou art,
 Musician with the fingers fine,
 Whose harp-strings are the human heart
 That thrills at every stroke of thine,

Thou, who dost man to man reveal,
 And each one to himself unfold,
 Mother of Truth at whose appeal
 Men fling aside the lies of old,

O Pain ! without thee what were life ?
 Its finest edge with thee destroyed—
 A harp-string loose, a blunted knife
 And joy itself but half enjoyed ;

While Strength, so tender to the weak,
 Should miss throughout his noblest end,
 And wistful eye and hollow cheek
 Ne'er touch a foe, nor win a friend.

And Beauty's self no longer dwell
 Save in a rounded, rosy face ;
 No grand ascetic features tell
 Of strifes and victories of grace.

And Love no more have aught to bear
 For hearts that ne'er for love did ache,
 Nor tears lend energy to prayer —
 None suffer for his brethren's sake.

No son upon his mother gaze
 And bless her for the throes of birth,
 Nor bring to her enfeebled days
 A tenderness not all of earth.

No martyr to the Cross uplift
 His speechless, yearning look, and find
 A thrill of subtlest bliss, thy gift,
 That leaves all gifts of joy behind.

But thou wilt not be *there*—above !
 In Heaven no place for Pain may be,
 And yet the fairest smiles of Love
 Have somewhat that she owes to thee.

Dear Pain, kind Pain, that mak'st us wise,
 Sure Heaven itself will be more sweet
 For marks of bygone agonies
 In Hands Divine and sacred Feet.

On faces of the saints remain
 Some looks that angels never wear,
 Some tender lines, first drawn by Pain ;
 Nor Praise forgets it once was Prayer.

A REAL LADY

BUT one moment, brilliant creature, did you flash upon
 our sight,
 Yet the ages there seemed gathered to a point of
 splendid light,
 That white brow of yours, the focus of a thousand
 scattered rays,
 Yours the past in all its glory, flung from unremem-
 bered days.

Creature of one generous moment, offspring of
 auspicious birth,
 What but brings you toll and homage from our
 tributary earth?
 Where's the race since toiling Adam but you share
 its noblest dower?
 Words and things alike your vassals, sovereign mistress
 of the hour.

Ah, the diamond on your finger, record of adven-
 turous strife,
 Love's own token, manhood's trophy, scarce too
 dearly bought with life,
That perhaps could tell a story, but your hand, so
 white and small,
 Bears in each unconscious finger histories stranger
 far than all.

Not twice twenty generations were to mould it one
too much,
Some great-grandame, skilled in leech-craft, trained it
to that facile touch,
And those finely outlined fingers came from one who
long ago,
Bending o'er his lute and viol, let the days in idlesse
flow.

Those bright eyes, your grandsire wooed them in one
moonlight hour, when chance
(Call it chance) detained his fair one, weary from the
country dance ;
Just one look, and all was over, he and she alike aver,
But how Time had toiled, preparing her for him and
him for her !

Snap one link, and see how swiftly all the beauteous
vision flies,
Missing that, he ne'er had boasted favour in those
starlike eyes,
Say, had he, the rose denied him, clasped the haw-
thorn to his breast,
You, to-day our pride and glory, had been only
second best.

And that voice of yours that quivers like a dewdrop
clear, and slides
Softly, one full orb of blessing, till within the heart it
glides,
'Tis not only yours, its sweetness came as softly and
as slow
As in jasmine bells the honey ripens while May
zephyrs blow.

Tenderness of man and woman, sweetness of centred lives,
Finest tact and subtlest culture, dreams of mothers,
daughters, wives,
Courteous wit, half-uttered feeling, sympathy in liveliest play,
Rich ancestral voices echo in each tone of yours to-day.

Yours the wisdom, truth, and beauty, toiled and longed for by mankind,
Yours the oft-distilled quintessence drawn from many a master-mind ;
What care you for Rome or Hellas, heroes of debate and war ?
Blot but one of these, and straightway you were less than now you are.

Singers, dumb and unremembered, chant to you from shores unknown,
Not a thought within your bosom wholly and indeed your own ;
From your dark and pencilled eyebrow to your soul's divinest mood
What is yours and what is Nature's, working on from good to good ?

Yet as then I saw you standing, heiress of perfected grace,
With the ancient world transfigured, radiant in your youthful face,
With your life and love embodied in that one enchanting smile,
You yourself the life and being of a world that was erewhile,

Something more, yet something dearer, seemed through
brain, heart, nerve, to thrill :
Self-impelled unselfish sweetness, graciousness of con-
scious will,
Deeper than all gifts, all culture, still upon my senses
grew,
Art, tradition, history, vanished—'twas a woman, and
'twas you !

A FAMILY LIKENESS

(TO N. OR M.)

ALL praise and admire you ; I own they are right,
And give you no more than your due,
But no one will guess, when I met you last night,
The *something* that charmed me in you.

It was not your talent, nor learning, nor grace,
Nor anything clever you said ;
But I hardly know what in the shape of your face,
And a whimsical turn of your head ;

A twinkle, or rather a gleam, in your eye,
Whose muscles seemed hardly to stir,
But it set my heart glowing and beating—for why ?
It made you claim kindred with *her*,

The one we love dearest, the best of the good !
Her voice through your arguments stole ;
You both seemed but one through the magic of blood,
And both spake at once to my soul.

O what are our words but the wind-beaten crop
That waves for the press and the street ?
Our thoughts, but the gleanings philosophers drop,
And we, undiscerning, repeat ?

But what are *ourselves* ? Something subtler than speech
And deeper than thought most profound ;
So wise and so foolish, so high out of reach,
So laughably close to the ground !

So dear for our follies, so dull with our sense,
So charming when least we intend,
So poor with our pounds, and so rich with our pence,
So happily baulked of our end !

So fleeting, so lasting, so rich and so poor !
Not wise, but far better by proof,
Since Wisdom herself would be turned out of door
Unless she housed under our roof.

Not virtue, nor vice, but the playground of both,
The wick where the candle-flame burns ;
—Life, love, and enjoyment, will, purpose, and
growth,—
A being that shudders and yearns ;

That loves just because it can't help it, and hates
On grounds that no mortal can say ;
A stream that must run as ordained by the Fates,
Though wasting its time on the way !

So proud of our reason, so wildly at war
With Reason each instant we breathe !
Still missing her limits by less and by more,
Above her at once and beneath.

—Strange *something*, that dwells in a curve, in a tone,
A movement, a look, and a phrase !
That guides pen and pencil, and makes them its own,
The *oneness* all matter obeys !

Strange human divineness, that rulest for aye
The realms both of soul and of sense,
Thou bridge 'twixt them both, where alternately they
Cross over, now thither, now thence,

Our lifelong companion, our riddle unread,
Thou mystery close at our side !
With thee all is living, without thee but dead ;
All own thee, but who has descried ?

A HAPPY HOUR

SONG

LIFE that daily mockest
With uncertain hope,
Joy that oft unlockest
Gates that seldom ope,
Time that hourly cheatest
Hearts with shadowy bliss,
Ye to-day are sweetest,
Ye have brought me this !

From your chalice golden
One unbroken draught,
Courage to embolden,
Upward wings to waft.

Somewhat that presages
Happiness may be,
Somewhere in the ages,
Pilgrim, even for thee !

Sunshine pouring ever
Blessed love and light,
Flowers and trees that never
Looked before so bright,
Minds that kindle, meeting,
Hearts that understand,
Souls that need no greeting
Told by voice or hand.

Ah, too close ye hover,
Hours of coming pain !
Ah, that sweetness over,
We shall thirst again !
Yet no grief nor sadness
O'er the past hath sway,
We have drunk of gladness,
We have had To-day !

THE COMET OF '82

THEY said, ' Betwixt the midnight hour and dawn
A comet haunts the sky your windows own,
Then rise to watch it, ere from sight withdrawn
The beauteous stranger pass to realms unknown.'

I left my pillow, and barefooted crept
To see the miracle by nature wrought ;
The house was silent, save myself all slept,
The spirit-hour was past, and Morn had brought

Her cool reviving freshness to the breast
Of dimly gleaming earth, and hovering sky :
Then high and low I looked, and east and west,
But nought of strange or wondrous could espy ;

Only a streak that glimmered o'er the woods,
The gentlest promise of the sunrise hour !
Only a gleam of silver on the floods,
The morning's daily beauty, nothing more !

Oh, miracle unseen ! Yet thou hast brought
Their guerdon to the eyes that watched ere day,
Since nature's live-long marvels, daily wrought,
Had, but for thee, unwelcomed passed away !

The dear and constant sunrise, morn by morn
Our old true friend, neglected though he be ;
—We treat his daily gifts with thankless scorn,
And spring betimes from sleep to gaze on thee,

On thee, strange shape, who ne'er hast given us aught
Save storms, inverted seasons, cares and fears !
Yet we'll forgive thee all, for this one thought,
Of benisons renewed through countless years.

THE EMPTY CHAIR

AND can there e'er have been a day,
 True friend, to feeling dear as thought;
 When thou hadst never crossed our way,
 And we to thee were less than nought?

That tree has stood before our birth,
 Will stand perhaps when we are dead,
 Yet all its glory and its worth
 Is—once it waved above thy head!

And was thy name a formal word,
 And did it mean nor less nor more.
 Than thousand others daily heard,
 Which left us duller than before?

The day we saw thee first has set
 No print on Memory's faithless sand.
 How didst thou look? we half forget:
 What happened when we touched thy hand?

We felt no strange and quickening thrill
 To tell us of the treasure there;
 Not ours the swift prophetic skill,
 To mark the halo round thy hair.

Oh, silent walls, oh, drowsy hearth!
 And is it, then, so short a space
 Since those old days of dreariest dearth?
 And can ye be the selfsame place?

On yonder chair a thousand guests
Have ta'en their seat and come and gone ;
Its antitype within our breasts
One figure holds, and only one,

And ere the wood had left the tree,
The osier from the marsh been torn,
That chair through all eternity
Was destined for that Form unborn !

OUTSIDE A DOOR

Is it twenty years ago,
Is it but a week or so,
Since within this porch I stood
Watching, with a door of wood
—Just a panel more or less,
'Twixt myself and happiness ?

Here are roses, whose sweet kiss
Waits upon the clematis ;
Sparrows peck by twos and threes,
And, methinks, the selfsame bees,
Buzzing somewhere out of view,
Make the dream both sweet and true.

Something tells me I went in—
Happiness did then begin ;
And the hours fled swiftly past,
Turned to weeks, months, years at last.

And that moment's joy and grace
Faded into commonplace,
And the glamour and the charm
Bade no longer currents warm
Dart and tingle through my veins,
Filled with joy's delicious pains.

Yet to-night I stand once more
Wistful, by the panelled door.
Is that moment gone, in sooth,
That sweet hour of vanished youth ?
For the selfsame flowers are there,
And the selfsame evening air ;
And, ah, yes ! that star is seen,
In its sky of turquoise green,
Looking just as calm on men,
And their loves and hopes, as then.

Oh, thou moment ! art thou gone ?
Hither, as I muse alone,
Comes thy old delightful thrill,
And my joy is future still ;
Still the door that holds my hope
Stands fast shut, but soon to ope ;
All between is fled from sight,
But that moment's inner might
Lives within me, fresh and keen ;
'Is'—perhaps the rest 'have been !'

TO A FRIEND

WHEN I thought you were gone, and I never again
Should see the dear face that's my pleasure and pain,
I struggled to harden my heart, and to be
Not happy and gladsome, but peaceful and free.

But now I have seen you, possess you once more,
The glow rushes back to my heart as before ;
The joy that I feel serves to measure my grief,
My pain was scarce known till I found the relief.

You are, oh, so much, so much more than I knew !
The world is but sunless and cold without you ;
We work in the dimness, some fancy we thrive,
Then out bursts the sun, and we *know* we're alive !

*'SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS
PLACE ; AND I KNEW IT NOT'*

I KNEW it not, when late at night
I wandered o'er the darkened land,
How fair would shine in morning light
Each radiant creature of Thy hand !
I knew not how each long wet gleam
O'er grass and fern would speak of Thee,
The cattle feeding by the stream—
Mere blots of black last night to me !

I knew it not, when, tired and sad,
I met a Sorrow by the way ;
What glorious wings the stranger had
Beneath his ponderous cloak of grey !
His face was stern at first and grave,
And almost harsh he seemed to be ;
But, ere he went, one smile he gave,
A smile he sure had learnt from Thee.

I knew it not when thick-piled books
Engrossed me while the lamp burnt low,
And thinkers, bred in studious nooks,
Spoke to my soul from long ago.
But once there came a time, a mood,
When those dead voices seemed to cry :
‘The great, the wise, the only good
Is not with us, but dwells on high.’

I knew it not, when, day by day,
Thy humblest servant at my side,
I half despised him—felt there lay
A gulf between us, deep and wide.
There *was* a gulf indeed between,
A deep wide gulf, alas ! for me ;
There came a day when he was seen
How near Thee, I how far from Thee !

I knew it not, when at my feet
I saw a little babe at play,
A child as lovely and as sweet
As rosebuds on a hedge in May !
But from those baby-lips anon
Some words of deeper meaning fell ;
There came a look, and then ’twas gone,
Which showed Thou lov’st the children well !

I knew it not, when first I dwelt
 Within this chamber small and plain,
 How soon a presence might be felt
 That ne'er would leave it poor again ;
 That by the fireside, at the board
 Such thoughts would breathe, such words
 be said,
 Nor that a prophet of the Lord
 Would share my cup and eat my bread.

I know it not, this summer even,
 As daylight hues in twilight melt,
 How near may be the hand of Heaven
 That hovers o'er us still unfelt ;
 And who can tell what form, what face,
 May bid me cry before I go,
 ' Surely the Lord is in this place ;
 I knew it not, but now I know ' ?

A RAINY DAY

(TO A FRIEND CONFINED TO THE HOUSE BY LONG ILLNESS)

PRISONED soul, I think of thee,
 Through this blank and endless day,
 As the hours so slowly flee
 'Twixt the raindrops and the clay.

While the leaves inglorious fall,
 Mastered by persistent Fate ;
 And there seems no voice nor call,
 Nought to lift the spirit's weight.

Not a sunbeam nor a song,
 Ne'er a greeting nor a face,
Every hour a lifetime long,
 Fog and dullness filling space.

And the aching head oppress
 Droops, and hope deserts the eyes,
Tired of work, more tired of rest,
 And the heart chokes back its sighs ;

And thy courage, often tried,
 Mourns its old elastic youth,
And Despondence at thy side
 Seems to wear the mask of Truth.

Prisoned soul, and canst thou bear
 Day by day this deadly life,
Wrestling hourly with despair,
 In a dumb yet stubborn strife ?

Left with thine own Past alone,
 Face to face with Memory, Thought,
Fear, Regret, and griefs unknown,
 Silent, solemn, undistraught ;

Bearing with thy Spartan smile
 Pain and dullness, deadlier ill,
While the hours in dismal file
 Pass, and leave thee dreary still ;

Canst thou face it? Canst thou dare
 To thyself to draw so near?
Then, O soul ! no more despair,
 What is left for thee to fear ?

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

FUNNY old world ! you go on and on
 In your own rough, clumsy way,
 With your springs that creak and your wheels that
 squeak,
 More sorrowful than gay.

Cranky old world, you crazed machine !
 We wonder you last so long,
 With the thumps you get and the wind and wet,
 And the times when all goes wrong.

You stick in the mud, you poor old world !
 And struggle, but all in vain ;
 But when folks just think you are ready to sink,
 You right yourself again.

Things fall out here and they fall out there,
 And 'tis weary to go uphill,
 And one man shrugs while another tugs,
 And the world goes onward still.

And one gets splashed from top to toe,
 Till patience is almost gone,
 And one gets bruised and another ill-used,
 But still the world goes on.

Clumsy old world ! so ready and rough,
 And never exactly right,
 With your odd misfits and your broken bits,
 And your screws that are seldom tight,

Dawdling old world ! with your laggard pace,
And steeds that barely crawl,
Your long delays and mistaken ways,
Oh, do you get on at all?

Sad old world ! with your broken hearts
Stuffed away in dingy holes,
With your overworked brains and your aches and pains,
And your tired and speechless souls,

Bad old world ! with your lies and cheats,
Your shams both great and small,
Your sloth and greed ; it is strange indeed
That you can go on at all.

Fickle old world ! with your ups and downs,
Your wild ironic freaks,
Where, mocked by Fate, the wise and great
Are ruled by two rosy cheeks,

Strange world, where a baby holds the reins,
And nearly lets them fall,
The more one knows you the stranger it grows
That you *can* go on at all !

Yet on you jog, for better for worse,
In many a changeful mood,
Nor sane, nor mad ; when we've called you bad
We begin to think you good.

Then struggle along 'gainst weather and wind,
Through this life's mire and loam !
If we want to mend the world, my friend,
You and I must begin at home.

TO A SMALL BOY

THEY tell us the world's in a desperate way,
 Instead of improving, gets worse every day ;
 While poor laws and prisons, asylums and schools,
 Leave half of us knaves and the rest of us fools :
 At times I believe them, perhaps, till I see
 Your little face peep round the corner at me,
 —You can't speak a word, yet you tell us, my pet,
 'Don't worry—the world's got some good in it yet.'

There's shaking of heads and there's knitting of
 brows

O'er terrors and troubles, rebellions and rows,
 O'er taxes and failures, o'er rents overdue,
 Old virtue departed and crime ever new :
 At times I believe them, and then, little elf,
 I hear you come running—so proud of yourself !
 —You can't speak a word, but a smile and a wink
 Say plainly, 'The world's not so bad as you think.'

They prophesy evil—perhaps they are right :
 'The darkness grows thicker and rarer the light ;
 The clouds are fast gathering, the tempest must
 fall,

And we and our dearest must go to the wall :'
 At times I believe them, and then, with a shout,
 From under the table you come popping out !
 —You can't speak a word, but it's all in your laugh :
 'Believe me, the world's not a bad one by half !'

What! *must* it be ruined? I doubt if it can
While you are left in it, my dear little man!
—Your innocent faith, and your love, and your trust,
Your freshness, that springs like a flower from the
dust!

Your sly little face at my elbow I see,
As full of all mischief as e'er it can be:
—You can't speak a word, yet you'd say, 'If I could,
I'd make this poor world both happy and good.'

'You don't know us all! There are hundreds hard by,
In hall or in cottage, as merry as I—
Small brothers and sisters in nursery and home,
The joy and the hope of our England to come:
Our hearts are as light as the hair on our brow,
That waves to the breezes wherever they blow;
—We can't say a word, but some day, recollect,
We'll come to the rescue when least you expect!'

God bless you, you sweet ones, wherever you lurk!
The more you can play, why, the better you'll work!
—Our heroes in frills, and our saints in short frocks,
Grace Darlings in pinafores, Gordons in socks!
At times we get troubled, but then we behold
Your bright little faces all haloed with gold!
—You can't find the words, but you'd say if you might,
'When *you're* dead and buried, *we'll* strive for the
right!'

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS!

That would be to yoke a courser of the sun to a mud-cart.

BURKE.

HORSES in every man's stable,
 Restless of nostrils and feet,
 Champing their grain in the darkness,
 Sensitive, fiery and fleet,
 Offspring of essence immortal,
 Precious and noble of birth,
 Spirits begotten in heaven,
 Forms kindly nurtured on earth !

Steeds for the shock of the battle,
 Charging with swift overthrow ;
 Coursers light-footed for skirmish,
 Wheeling and mocking the foe :
 Messengers, winged with good tidings,
 Sped like the flight of a dart,
 —Swiftness of sympathy, bearing
 Comfort to sorrow of heart !

Palfreys for maidenly beauty
 White as her innocent mind,
 Spotless, unsullied and noble,
 Stately, yet tenderly kind ;
 Yokefellows patient of labour,
 Trained to the furrows and clays,
 Patient in toils without glory,
 Grandly regardless of praise !

Such are the steeds in our stable,
Such are the words on our tongue :
O to use noble things nobly,
Mindful from whence they have sprung !
Not with a beggarly rider
Thwarting a courser of light ;
Not with a load of dishonour
Soiling his ancestry bright ;

Not on an errand of meanness
Sending a child of the sun,
Drooping of neck and degraded,
Sick of the work to be done !
Not with a burden of falsehood
Loading the palfrey of Truth,
Black as a blot on its whiteness,
Hateful, misshapen, uncouth !

Not on the steeds of Achilles
Laying the lash of a slave ;
Not in the furrows of labour
Driving the plough of a knave ;
Not in the language of angels
Speaking for Folly to hear,
Clothing in accents heroic
Meanness and weakness and fear !

Nay, on Bucephalus' shoulders
Rides Alexander alone ;
Nay, when the Cid is dismounted,
Vacant his saddle and throne ;
Nay, when great thoughts have departed,
Hushed be all greatness of words,
Downcast as riderless horses
Waiting the call of their lords !

*MADAM ETIQUETTE*¹

ONCE there was a dear old dame in stiff brocade and
 hoop,
 In buckram cased and tightly laced, and never known
 to stoop ;
 With rouge and fan in her sedan she rode through dry
 and wet :
 Her name I'll tell— you know it well—'twas Madam
 Etiquette. .

If asked to tea, full solemnly she'd curtsey at the door,
 Ne'er lounge or lean, though she had been there
 fifty times before ;
 Ne'er made a joke of timid folk, discussed you to
 your face,
 Called Shakspeare 'nice,' or asked 'the price of that
 sweet pretty lace !'

If asked to sing, with smiles she'd bring her music out
 at once ;
 And where she dined ne'er seemed to find her neigh-
 bour was a dunce ;
 Was never bored, but could afford for all things
 time and care,
 For lawyers and for lady's-maids, good books and
 powdering hair.

¹ *Madame l'Étiquette*, a nickname originally given by Marie Antoinette to Madame de Noailles.

But weak she grew, and fashions new quite drove her
from her place,
Since railways came the dear old dame seemed sadly
out of case ;
The penny post distressed her most—its rattling easy
style
Unlike the courteous English our granddames loved
erewhile.

And so she pined and dwindled and faded, day by
day ;
—They laid her in a decent grave when she had
passed away :
They laid her in the grave with scarce a shadow of
regret,
—Few, very few, are left to mourn good Madam
Etiquette !

When all things are uprooted, disturbed each ancient
plan,
When Manners now no longer, but Mammon maketh
man,
When dukes and earls from low-born churls have stol'n
a language vile,
And queens are ranged with columbines in photo-
graphic file ;

When childhood's cheek no bashful streak of modesty
displays,
And maidens, coy of old, enjoy barefaced the public
gaze,
And matrons wed each frizzly head with novel notions
fill,
—Without, set up by milliners, within, upset by Mill ;

When everyone can scribble and very few can write,
And telegrams come pouring in to put you in a
fright,
And no one sends you letters, but everyone regards
His duty done by scrawling three lines on postal
cards ;

When folks who used till introduced to keep at
distance meet,
Oft seize you by the button-hole when passing down
the street,
Or send you begging circulars, and, getting no reply,
Take up their pen and write again to know the reason
why ;

When curtseys, often 'dropped' of old, are 'dropped'
for good and all,
And feathers, flowers, and flounces adorn the servants'
hall,
And home is reckoned homely, and reverence out of
date,
And Leisure's kind observance dead, life moves at
such a rate !

When parents are their children's slaves, and age the
butt of youth,
And none dares seem in earnest, and sophists play
with truth,
And each is busy for himself, and none takes thought
for all,
The strong go struggling on alone, the weakest to
the wall ;

When brewers rule the nation, and shoeblacks are
 esquires,
And no one is contented, and everyone aspires,
—I almost wish my time had come for paying nature's
 debt,
And I might go and lie beside good Madam Etiquette !

*LES ABSENTS ONT TOUJOURS
RAISON*

YES, there he used to sit
Where the lime-tree shadows flit,
And we listened to his wit
 Day by day !
His seat is empty now,
And perhaps you'll fancy how
We miss him ; *that* I trow
 None can say.

We've lost our greatest man,
The one to think and plan,
And ne'er another can
 Fill his place ;
We miss our kingly head,
Each thing he did and said,
And the noble lustre spread
 O'er his face.

Yet if we heard to-night
He was coming back, we might
Recall, not half in spite,
Sundry things.
He's perfect now he's gone,
But—close at hand—you'll own
There's something to condone,
Even in kings.

And oh ! I wish I knew
Which really was the true,
The simple, honest view
Of the case !
The hero when away,
The man of every day :
Which is *himself*?—O say !
Where's his place ?

IN THE INFIRMARY

ONLY a smile from a white sick face,
 Only a look from two wistful eyes,
 A word that meant nought, with how quick a pace
 It sets the heart beating 'neath dullest skies.

O smile ! is it foolish to love thee so ?
 (A trick of the muscles, and nothing more !)
 Dark eyes, when uplifted, O did ye know
 The worth of the message your glances bore ?

A look that lingers about the heart,
 More sweet than the tenderest sunset red,
 That thrills with a sudden delicious start
 The worn-out fibres that seemed so dead !

'Twas nothing at all but a passing gaze,
 Like a butterfly's wing it came and went,
 Yet my heart will feed for days and days
 On that one, one look, and abide content.

November 11, 1881.

GOOD AND CLEVER

If all the good people were clever,
And all clever people were good,
The world would be nicer than ever
We thought that it possibly could.

But somehow 'tis seldom or never
The two hit it off as they should ;
The good are so harsh to the clever,
The clever so rude to the good !

So, friends, let it be our endeavour
To make each by each understood,
For few can be good like the clever,
Or clever so well as the good !

February 25, 1890.

KINE, OR COWS?

LAST night we were three, and we wandered at even
Over the side of the hill ;
The earth was all golden, the sunlight in heaven,
Glad was our spirit, and still.

The birds seemed to tell us our thoughts without
thinking ;
Sweet was the breath of the kine ;
As 'mid the long bracken they watched us unshrinking,
They too were almost divine !

To-night I am one, and the pathway is lonely,
Sunshine and music have fled !
There go the cows, but to-night they are only
Short-horns, at so much a head !

MUD

STAGNANT pool, half-dried, hoof-trodden,
With thy stumpy willow tree,
Yellow leaves by east winds bitten,
Who could sing a song of thee?
Not a floweret grows beside thee,
Not a ripple greets the sun,
Ne'er a picture haunts thy bosom,
Murmuring music hast thou none.

Stay ; the gladly welcomed swallows
Two and two around thee fly,
Gleaming blue and glancing whiteness,
Motion, grace, and mystery !
Thou their last year's home renewest :
From those plaster walls shall spring
Life that makes the nations brethren,
Love that babes and poets sing.

'O NATA MECUM'

(A LONG WAY AFTER HORACE)

O KIND old tea-pot, born with me
 In Melbourne's days, what growls, what glee,
 What love, what squabbles spring from thee,
 And slumbers dreamy !
 Come from the shelf and pour Pekoe
 For dear black-coated Mr. Crow,¹
 This Tuesday afternoon (I know
 He likes it creamy !)

Although he's steeped in learned lore,
 He'll have a second cup, or more ;
 —Even grim old Johnson, wise before,
 On this grew wiser ;
 Your gentle teasing gives a twitch
 To dullest brains ; with smiles you 'witch
 State secrets (kept as dark as pitch)
 From sage adviser !

New hopes to anxious minds are born ;
 The poorest wretch pokes out his horn,
 Laughs Mrs. Grundy's cap to scorn,
 Even kings despising !
 Thee Beauty courts with mirthful face,
 And, arm-in-arm, each sister-grace
 By candle-light, till Phœbus chase
 The stars, uprising.

DAISIES

DAISIES, daisies on the grass,
Keep ye count how Time does pass ?
Fresh as stars that never die
Seem you in your emerald sky.
—Mortals vanish in a trice !
I have breathed but once or twice,
Scarce had time to wake and sleep,
Love a friend, and then to weep,
Know the world has joys and pains
Since the time of daisy-chains ;
And almost before I see
What the work of life should be,
Where the search for Truth must lie,
What is Love, and whence am I,
Ye as fresh as erst, and brave,
Haply will bestar my grave !

March 17, 1877.

SONNETS

TO A FRIEND

FRIEND, whom to call my friend I dare be proud,
I triumph for thee even amidst thy pain,

I see that noble head in sorrow bowed,
And feel the weight of glory thou must gain
By every blow that Fate on thee doth rain ;

What showers of blessing in each tearful cloud
That soon will break in sunshine on thy plain,

While heaven stands open, and the lark sings loud.

And then I turn to watch the common crowd
Of petty lives, in sordid struggles nurst,

And know the paltriest pain is ne'er allowed
To sting the poorest, meanest, vilest, worst,

Save by that Power that bids the lofty-brow'd
Bend low, and oftentimes own the last are first !

THE JUNGFRAU

O WHITE-ROBED mountain maiden, ever young,
 Lofty and pure, yet loved by humankind !
 The many look on thee, and each doth find
Something to praise, though with no prophet's tongue.
— Each deems he knows thee and can boast thy love,
 Few guess how few can truly look on thee !
 How unapproachably, divinely free
That highest life of thine, as far above
 Our thoughts, our vision, as the ecstasy
 Of some great saint, whose daily face we see,
And think we read his motives by our own,
 And love him in our petty way, while he
Lifts up his God-lit brow to heaven alone,
 In loftiest, loneliest heights of piety.

GIMMELWALD : *August 24, 1881.*

THE GREAT FROST, 1880-81

No roar of wheels is heard, no rush of feet ;
 Grey gloomy sky hangs thick above our head,
 Cold, hushed, and stiff in snowy winding-sheet
 Great London lies, as helpless as the dead,
 Like some famed empress, at whose long-watched
 bed

Physicians mark the heart's expiring beat,
 And know nor gold nor skill can death defeat,
 Nor bring that ashen cheek one flush of red.
 —Proud Queen of Cities, should this dreary hour
 Pass like a trance, and life's warm currents flow,
 Say, wilt thou own the impotence of power,
 So seeming great, so suddenly laid low,
 And raise one glance when storms have ceased to lower
 To Him who sends the sunshine and the snow ?

January 1881.

DEATH

I THOUGHT upon the charnel-house and grave,
The fetid, sickening horror of the tomb,
The chill corruption and the certain doom
Of that fair white soft flesh which now we have.
—Day follows day, yet nought avails to save
The hand that writes, the eye that reads, from gloom
And impotence, and loss of 'what' and 'whom,'
And nothingness confounding lord and slave.
We tremble, or we sicken, or we rave
At every glimpse of Death ; we hem him in
With garlands, or we think with music's din
To drown his hollow tones ; we deck his cave
With marble sculptures, gilded epitaphs,
Yet Death is Death ! We shudder, and he laughs.

April 30, 1888.

LIFE

O LIFE, they place a skull beside thy board,
And bid thee 'muse on Death.' They bid thee look
On open coffins, and on shapes abhorred,
And think 'twill teach thee, like some Gospel book.
They know not that the Life that maketh me,
And is the thing I am, my being's lord,
Can never dwell with Death ; Death cannot be
While Life survives, and doth her light afford.
—When all grows dark, take courage, soul, and say :
' I fear not, Death, thy skeleton-embrace ;
Thy noisome smells, thy charnel-house decay,
Have, where the soul exists, no power nor place.
The soul is life, and lives : Death takes his share
Only of me, because I am not there !'

April 30, 1888.

THE DAY AFTER A FUNERAL

O CHILL stern sky ! O grey and silent morn !
 O sullen trees hard-bound with glassy rime !
 You bring to mind some dreary funeral time,
 When broken hearts, most inwardly forlorn,
 Cased in the icy mail of grief or scorn,
 Bear up to breaking, less perhaps sublime
 Than dulled, mechanic, like some tragic mime
 Who plays dry-eyed, by home-bred sorrow torn.
 But see—a burst of sunshine, and the tears
 Drop as the genial rain from branch and bush,
 As at one word of kindness they will gush,
 Even in Death's presence, or in olden years,
 As Martha's may have trickled when she cried,
 ' Hadst *Thou* been here, my brother had not died.'

January 12, 1874.

OXFORD ABOVE THE FLOODS

CLEAR liquid blue, with streaks of meadow green,
 —The waters stretched beneath a kindred sky,
 A mighty cloud hung o'er them, and between
 Lay Oxford, clad in lucid purity ;
 White shone her battlements, the dome on high,
 And spires, and countless towers, as she had been
 But purified that morn from all things mean,
 —A shriven penitent with tear-bright eye !
 —Yet some there be who droop the head and sigh,
 And mourn, nor is it strange—our virtue dead ;
 But one perhaps even now is passing by
 By whom th' unwritten parable is read.
 O youth, by loftiest yearnings hither led,
 Take courage ! God and Nature cannot lie.

February 6, 1886.

THE GORSE AT ELSFIELD

NEAR OXFORD

BURNING, yet unconsumed, one blaze of gold
 Thou flamest, dazzling gorse, beneath the sky,
 In clear hot June, with not a shadow nigh,
 While quivering larks with ecstasy untold
 Hang in the cloudless ether, glad and bold,
 And wingèd seeds float past unhurriedly.
 —Kneeling and barefoot in the desert dry
 Did Moses see a rarer sight of old?
 And hast thou ne'er one word for mortals now
 Who crave, like him, some message from on high?
 The answer came, 'Bethink thee, who art thou?
 The prophet's heart foreruns the prophet's eye:
 God's glory burns from every radiant bough—
 One sees it, and the rest go blindly by.'

LINCOLN AFTER SUNSET

A VAPOROUS lurid mass of smoky gloom,
 Pierced here and there by lamps and furnace-glow,
 And chimney-obelisks, that darkly loom
 Like old Egyptian taskmasters who know
 Nor pitying pause nor kind unbending ! . . . so
 Laborious Lincoln showed this wintry even,
 Just when the sunset light had passed from heaven,
 And left a weary world behind. But oh,
 What tongue could ever paint the blue above ?
 And one clear star that throbbed and shot with light
 Poised o'er the restless city, calmly bright,
 Impartial, yearning as a mother's love ?
 It knows not, feels not, thinks not, yet to-night
 Moves us, like eyes that know not *how* they move.

March 1886.

THE KING'S FATHER

A Chronicle Play

THE KING'S FATHER

1746-1765

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

King LOUIS the FIFTEENTH.	Duc DE BOURGOGNE <i>and royal children.</i>
The DAUPHIN.	<i>Peasant children.</i>
Maréchal DE SAXE, <i>uncle of the Dauphiness.</i>	The QUEEN.
Maréchal DU MUY, <i>a friend of the Dauphin.</i>	MARIA JOSEPH, <i>the Dauphiness.</i>
M. LANDSMATH.	Madame LOUISE, <i>daughter of Louis the Fifteenth.</i>
The Abbé DESMOULINS. ¹	Madame DE POMPADOUR.
DE LA VIGNE, <i>a Protestant pastor.</i>	Countess IDA.
WILHELM STRAUSS, <i>a painter on china.</i>	<i>Lady-in-waiting.</i>
DAMIENS, <i>an assassin.</i>	<i>Peasant girl.</i>
	ELISE BONNIVET, <i>betrothed to Wilhelm Strauss,</i>
	<i>Physician, Chairmen, Soldiers &c.</i>

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Near the Bast-Ei, Saxon Switzerland.*
Moonlight.

MARIA JOSEPH *and* Countess IDA.

Maria Joseph. We must have gone further, Ida, than I ever intended. See how far away the castle looks, what a height above us!

[*Pointing to the Königstein.*
Countess Ida. Yes, and how black and gloomy!

M. J. No one would think, would he, how happy

¹ A fictitious character.

we have been in those grim walls? Happier, I know, than I shall ever be anywhere else. [*Sighs.*]

Countess Ida. Ah, your Royal Highness, our best friends are often those who look sternest at first. That old Königstein, black and formidable as it appears now, has been better to your Royal Highness's predecessors than all the palaces and pictures of Dresden.

M. J. Yes. There's not much trust to be put in looks or fair professions, as brittle as the smile on a china shepherdess's face, and with about as much heart behind the gilding. Tell me, Ida, will it be so in France, where I am soon going?

Countess Ida. Your Royal Highness had better ask the Marshal de Saxe, he is the best authority on that subject. What does he say of France?

M. J. Oh, Uncle Maurice is plain-spoken enough—Don't trust any of the women about the Court, and only do your best to win the King. Hard advice, Ida, for a poor girl like me, just turned of sixteen. Do you think he's right?

Countess Ida. Depend upon it, madam, if any man *can* know about women—a thing (between your Royal Highness and me) which I consider extremely doubtful—that man is your Uncle Maurice. Talk of his great victories, successes at Philipsbourg, at Prague, and now at Fontenoy, why they're nothing in the world to his triumphs with all of us. An empress or a waiting maid must equally succumb to him. He knows how to lay siege to a lady better than to a town! Thank goodness, he's always kept out of *my* way. I suppose I'm like a poor paltry little village, not worth attempting.

M. J. Don't say that, Ida [*caressingly*]; a grand old city that he spares, Lutheran as he is, for the sake of its cathedral and the relics of its patron saint.

Countess Ida. Your Royal Highness is getting fast into practice. If you talk like that at Paris, you'll win them all, laced coats and petticoats alike.

M. J. There's only one person I want to win, Ida, and that person is—you know who.

Countess Ida. The King, of course?

M. J. [*laughing*]. Oh, I think I can manage him. Uncle Maurice has told me how to go to work—his favourite colours and his favourite songs. No, it's not the King. Try again.

Countess Ida. The Queen! Ah, I don't wonder at your feeling anxious there, considering how your grandfather treated that poor Stanislas, her own father. 'Twill be lucky indeed if she does not hate you, my own charming angel, whom all the world loves, and who looks as if she loved all the world, just like that beautiful moon up there.

M. J. Oh, Ida, what an old flatterer you are! But it isn't the Queen. Poor thing! there is no one in the world (except myself, you know, Ida, of course) that I am so sorry for. Queens in these days have not much power, except at chess, and even then they are often at the mercy of much smaller pieces.

Countess Ida. The saints forbid that it should be Madame de Pompadour!

M. J. Ida, I could not have believed it of you. What do you think of me?

Countess Ida. The best thoughts possible, your Royal Highness; but the Marshal has told us that she expects great things of your coming. She says that ever since his first wife died, the Dauphin has been a different man; she fears he is turning devout, and hopes you will be able to put a stop to it.

M. J. The intolerable presumption of the woman!

You can't really mean that she said that ! Who told you ?

Countess Ida. A little bird whispered it in my ear.

M. J. I could not have believed it ; and yet one might believe anything of her. The ruin and disgrace of France ! Oh, what words can I find to say what that woman is ?

Countess Ida. With respect be it said, your Royal Highness had better not look out for any. Your difficulty will be, not in finding words, but in smothering them down. If you speak of her, speak in a whisper even here.

M. J. They say she insisted that her butler should have the cordon of the order of St. Louis. Päh !—
[*Breaks off a twig and throws it down the ravine.*] Is there any limit to the woman's audacity ?

Countess Ida. But all this while, your Royal Highness has never told me whose favour it is you wish to win !

M. J. [*sorrowfully*]. Oh, Ida, can't you guess ? There is but one. The Dauphin—my husband that is to be.

Countess Ida. Ah ! so—the Dauphin—well, really, that's very natural, my dear—very natural indeed ; and a creditable feeling, too, for a young lady in your Royal Highness's situation. I wonder it had not struck me before.

M. J. If you notice, Uncle Maurice never says one word about him except how clever he is—never [*flings her arms round Ida's neck and suddenly bursts into tears*]
—never that he loves me, or even *wishes* to love me. Oh, what is a girl like me—so far, so far away from home and friends—to do if her husband does not love her ? And I *know* he does not ! never a word, never a line, but the merest forms, his heart

all the while shut up in his first wife's coffin. There's my uncle writing pages on pages about my gowns, my sleeves, my trains, even my stays—if it was fitting out one of his big armies for a campaign he could not spend more time over it—lace and fringe, and taffety and velvet and brocade; and under it all a poor, poor little starving beggarly heart that nobody cares about.

Countess Ida. Indeed, your Royal Highness should not say such things. To look at you must always be to love you.

M. J. Ah! I know better. I passed a woodcutter's daughter just now with her red handkerchief on her head and her great basket of faggots on her back, and she was singing one of their little ballads—

My Fritz and I beside the stove
We warm our hands together;
Our hearts are all aglow with love,
Nor mind the howling weather!

A silly little song—but, oh, what would I not give for a Fritz to love me like that, even though he wore wooden shoes and could not write his own name!

Countess Ida. Hush, hush, your Royal Highness—there's some one coming! [*Two children cross the stage.*]

M. J. Darlings! in their little fur hoods, like Hänsel and Gretel in the old picture-book! Come, Ida, behind this tree, and we shall hear what they are saying.

Franz. Ah! you're afraid, Christine! I knew you would be!

Chris. No, I ain't, Franz—not a bit [*cuddling up to him*].

Franz. Yes, you are, or you wouldn't shake so. But you needn't be. There are no ogres in the forest now. It was all a long time ago, you know, that story of granny's.

Chris. But there's a horrid giant—I know there is—up there ! [*Pointing to the Königstein.*] He comes out at night and eats people.

M. J. A nice character for my father !

Franz. I don't believe it. Hast thou ever seen him ?

Chris. No, but I've heard him—yes, I have, *really*, Franz—bellowing and roaring like a hunted bull, till the ground shook under him. He always roars just at his supper time. Lieschen says it's because he's hungry, and of course she knows.

Countess Ida. The six o'clock gun. Poor little dears !

Franz. I don't care. I tell thee, Christine, it's all nonsense about a giant. Why, the King lives up there, and has got a daughter who is the most beautiful princess in the world. She combs gold out of her hair, and wears a dress like sunshine, and a king's son is going to marry her, and they'll be very happy ever afterwards.

Chris. Will they, *really* ?

Franz. Why, of course they will. The stories always say so !

Chris. Perhaps, you know, they are just a little unhappy sometimes. Isn't there an old witch or somebody who hates the princess and wants to shut her up in a cage ?

M. J. There, Ida ! Many a true word is spoken in jest.

Franz. Don't talk about witches. They're horrid things, and you know when they're hundreds and hundreds of years old they can pretend to be young if they like, till somebody finds out the way they do it, and makes them go back to their proper shape ;—and oh, what nasty, ugly, hateful things they are !

I'll tell you what, Christine. I think old Frau Häberlein, that sells walnuts, is a witch. She has such a way of looking at you that she makes the groschen drop out of your hand—and I *know* she cheats. [*Gun goes off.*] Hark! What was that?

Chris. Oh, Franz, did you hear it?

Franz. It was the giant. Oh, what shall we do? Run, run, as fast as you can. I see his long legs coming after us! [*Exeunt children.*]

M. J. And so I am to be very happy ever afterwards—well, well!

Countess Ida. At all events, your Royal Highness will be able to make others so.

M. J. But the witch, Ida—the witch!

Countess Ida. She can't stand against the sign of the cross, you know. None of them can. Heaven keep us all, wherever we are. [*Crosses herself.*]

M. J. [*picking a spray off a fir tree*]. Don't think me foolish, Ida, but this little spray which I am hiding in my bosom will be dearer to me than all the roses and lilies of Versailles. See, there's a bit for thyself to remember me by. Long before it is faded, the greenness will have gone out of my life. But I have no more choice than a sprig of pine torn up and carried where others choose. Good-bye, trees, good-bye, forest! [*Sings.*]

In the forest path to tread,
Oh, how sweet, how sweet!
With the pinewoods green o'erhead,
Golden at my feet.
Soft the breeze that comes and goes
In the boughs above,
Soft the banks that nature strows
For my weary love.

Soft the stock-dove's voice afar
Gurgles like a stream ;
Even the squirrels' chattering war
Breaks not on our dream.

Ah ! the couch of gold is spread,
Love, but not for me :
From the dreamy forest bed
Far away I flee.

Ah ! the pine tree's fragrant smell
Greets me as I fly ;
Through my tears I bid farewell :
Oh, good-bye, good-bye !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*Paris. The Queen's Apartments.*

The KING in an armchair. The DAUPHIN in the embrasure of a window. The QUEEN and Madame LOUISE embroidering.

King. What ages, madam, you have been over that work ! You began it before your poor little daughter-in-law died, and you won't have it done till——

Madame L. Sire, perhaps you did not observe my brother was in the room. [*Points to the window.*]

King [*pinching her ear*]. Silly little bundle of rubbish ! Do you suppose he can shut his eyes and ears ? The sooner he grows used to it the better. Every shop in Paris tells the same story. Drive where I will I see nothing but portraits of the new Madame la Dauphine peeping out from among garlands and ribbons behind the very panes where that other poor soul was a year ago. She and the Maréchal seem to divide my good people's favour pretty equally. Love

and war, as usual, are the divinities of the city of Paris.

[*Hums an air.*]

Hurrah for Fontenoy,
And our gallant, gallant boy,
Whom all the world must honour.
What lass in all our streets
But would kiss him for his feats,
And be proud when he smiled upon her?

Isn't that quite to your taste, madam?

Queen. Had your Majesty good sport to-day?

King. Detestably bad! And by way of raising our spirits we met a funeral—I can't think for my part what the wretches are coming to. Even when they're dead they can't keep out of one's way.

Queen. How shocking! How strange!

King. Yes, I thought it so strange, I made my people stop. You would have laughed to see how white some of those fellows in livery turned. I rode up and asked the rustics what they had got there. They said a dead man if I had no objection. Of course I had no objection, and I asked what he died of—you know I thought it might be something catching. Would you believe it? They actually had the face to say he had died of hunger. Hunger—I don't believe there is such a disease. It is all stuff, like the vapours you ladies are so fond of having—as out of date as the Black Death itself. Did you ever hear anything so outrageous?

Queen. It does seem strange to us.

King. An impossibility—an absurdity. In my opinion, it is not the want of food that is to be complained of, but the abominable way they dress it. Since Poitevin died no one has any feeling for a *vol-au-vent* or a *sauce à la Maintenon*. I could tell his handiwork anywhere. It was seraphic.

Queen. Like Sarti's touch on the violin. One could have told who it was with one's eyes shut. Poor Poitevin !

King. And to think that he will be only a name to our descendants ! They may read Racine's verses, or that impudent fellow Voltaire's—much good may they do them ! but they will never have an idea—no one can ever give them a notion of Poitevin's sauces—Poitevin at his best [*holds up his hands*]; and talking of that, I will wish you good evening, as it is close upon supper time, and I want to look in and see Bourget does not ruin the salad, as he did last time. Make haste and finish your work, madam, for I am sick of the sight of it, and of those dismal gowns too.

[*Sings.*

We'll flood the streets with wine,
And we'll toast him nine times nine,
And we'll set the casks a-flowing ;
And while the world goes round,
And dismal care is drowned,
We'll drink till past cock-crowing.

[*Salutes them ceremoniously and withdraws.*

They curtsy as he leaves the room.

Queen. And all this time my son has not said a word. [*Goes towards him.*

Dauphin. There is no need. Your Majesty has been far better entertained.

Queen. Ah, my son, you are always grave and sorrowful now.

Dauphin. What should I be but grave—for France, for myself, for all ? Ah ! my mother, what is that sad and shocking thing he tells us but a parable—a too true and sorrowful parable ? What is the nation but a newly expired corpse stopping our way

as we go forth to seek our pleasures?—a starved, poverty-stricken, rigid, helpless carcase.

Queen [*aside to Madame Louise*]. Poor fellow ! his thoughts are all in the churchyard now.

Madame L. Do not stop him, mother, it does him good to talk. For my part I do not wonder at him.

Dauphin. It has looked to us for bread, and what have we given it ? Dry husks of unfulfilled promises. It has asked for warmth, and we have replied to it by tearing off its covering to wrap around our gross lazy selfishness. It has cried out to us with a feeble voice, it has stretched out its pale hands for help, and we have drowned the appeal in the shouts of our own revelry. We have bled it to death with taxation, bound it down with cruel enactments, crushed the heart out of it with iron severities, and now it is carried out dead—dead in our sight, and we ask with loathing what it is, and wonder how it has come there, and how it dares to stop the pathway of our pleasures. But oh, mother, there is an awful resurrection coming.

Queen. Yes, my son, yes, we know of course the poor will rise again as well as the rich. The Bible says so—does it not ?

Dauphin. *Scio quia resurget in resurrectione in novissimo die.* But ah, when *our* Lazarus bursts his graveclothes, he will not do it at a Divine voice. He will break forth from his cerements not at the call of Love and Pity, but of Hatred and Revenge. There will be fury in his glance, and the frenzy of a giant in his tremendous frame as he arises to cry with a voice of thunder for our blood, as he strides through our stately streets, our splendid houses, trampling down innocence and guilt, honour and shame alike, things

sacred and things vile, with his gaunt and bony feet, to which the graveclothes and fetid sepulchral odours are still clinging, and gluts himself with the fatness of a thousand pampered and riotous saloons. I see it all—only too well—I seem to see it even from this very window where I stand now.

Madame L. Oh, brother, do not look so dreadful. It is because you are ill and unhappy that these things weigh upon you.

Queen. O my son, what a vision you have conjured up! And now, too, when you ought to have none but joyful thoughts.

Dauphin. Mother, I thought at least you would not mock me. I had hoped here at least I might cherish the memory of the dead without wounding the sensibilities of the living.

Queen. I should like to see you happy.

Dauphin. You owe me an example, mother. Are you so happy, then, yourself?

Queen. I can never be unhappy with such a son; no, not when the strange destiny that rules the fortune of princes has ordained that he should espouse the daughter of my father's bitterest rival. Women can sometimes love where men could barely live and let live. And if she only makes you happy, I will take her and hers, Louis, to my inmost heart.

Dauphin. Dearest mother, even from you I can hear no more of this. Time enough to face the trial when it comes. By the cradle of my child, by the chair of my mother—in this room where *she* has so often been welcome—O *how* you used to welcome her! how you loved her, and how she loved you back again—here, at least, let me breathe freely for awhile. Do not grudge me this last week.

Queen. My son, you shall not hear another word from me. I was wrong, and you must pardon it.

[*He caresses her.*]

Dauphin. And you, Louise, at your books of devotion again! Ah, you are the wisest of us all.

Madame L. The most fortunate, brother. You will have to govern the country; I need only pray for it.

Dauphin. But we cannot do without you, you must not desert us.

Madame L. Ah, brother, you do not know what you ask. When one reads the lives of the saints, how one wearies of the Court, how one longs to throw off its burdens, and live, like St. Catherine or St. Teresa, in a high pure atmosphere at the mountain top.

Queen. At your age, my child, you should not talk thus. Should she, my son?

Madame L. I was never young, mother, and something tells me I shall never be old.

Dauphin. Princes cannot choose their lot.

Enter DU MUY.

Du Muy. I am sent to summon your Highness to meet a deputation on your approaching marriage.

Dauphin. I look like a happy bridegroom, do I not? Adieu, my two best comforters;—and here is a third [*slipping his arm into that of Du Muy*], whom you would value if you knew him as I do.

Du Muy. Her Majesty knows his Royal Highness too well not to believe him in everything but his estimate of himself on one hand and his servants on the other.

[*Exeunt Dauphin and Du Muy.*]

Queen. And you and I, my daughter, will go and look at our bridal dresses.

Madame L. If I durst I should always wear mourn-

ing. The less the world sees of me and my deformities the better.

Queen. Do not say so, my child. You exaggerate your own disadvantages in order to drive your admirers away. But were you as deformed as old Scarron himself, you still might charm as he did.

Madame L. Beauty and wit! who has more of them than the worst woman in Versailles? Heaven preserve us from such snares!

Queen. I cannot agree with you. I never could talk. Let us go and see the dresses. [*Exit Queen.*]

Madame L. [*slightly lifting her hooped petticoat*]. And oh for the day when I shall fling you aside for ever, and draw the veil of a Carmelite sister between these weary eyes and the vain and wicked world!

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—*A Room at Sèvres.*

WILHELM STRAUSS and ELISE BONNIVET,
she painting a china vase.

Elise. Is that better?

Wilhelm. That is almost perfect. No one at Meissen could have done it so well. I am proud of my pupil. [*Kisses her hand.*]

Elise. You have charged dear for your lessons.

Wilhelm. They cost me my heart, and you know everything ought to be paid for according to what it is worth. I little thought when I came here on the Marshal de Saxe's recommendation to help set up this school of china painting at Sèvres, that Cupid, whom I have so often painted and modelled, would be

giving me a lesson in love. Up to now I had always fancied him a stiff, shiny, glazed bit of porcelain. Now I find my mistake! The image has come to life at last!

Elise. And you don't want to go back to Dresden?

Wilhelm. Not till you are able to come with me. But oh, Elise, how I should like you to see Pirna and the beautiful slopes of the Elbe and the cherry blossoms. Some day we must go there together.

Elise. We must earn a little money first, and besides I have never dared to tell my aunt yet. What would she say if she knew I was to be married to a heretic?

Wilhelm. Do you know I am almost afraid the old lady suspects something? She cut me very short the other day when I offered to add up her accounts for her; and oh dear! those black eyes of hers, they run into me like pins whenever I see them.

Elise. What would you do if you were in my place? And do you know I have lost one of your letters, and I believe she has got hold of it. What shall we do? I shall be sent off to a convent, and then——

Wilhelm. Dearest! don't let us cross bridges before we get to them. See! [*painting*] I think that tulip is quite perfect now.

Elise. How dull the colours look before they are burnt in! That was just what my life was before you came; I didn't know what a difference it would make.

Wilhelm. Ah, Elise, you may well say so. The fires of love can work far greater miracles than that. They can make a poor lodging house into a royal palace, and turn rags into cloth of gold. Here comes M. de la Vigne. Ah, how ill he looks!

Enter DE LA VIGNE.

Welcome, M. de la Vigne ! Elise, I have told him our secret, and he is come to fix the day of our marriage.

De la V. God bless you, my daughter ! You will be a happy woman, for you have won the love of an honest man. I have known him from a boy, and I know that his heart is all your own.

Elise. Something in his face tells me that.

De la V. But you will have to love him very dearly. We belong to a persecuted sect, and if you ally yourself to us——

Elise. There is no 'if' in the matter, sir. I do not *choose* to love : I love because I cannot choose.

Wilhelm. She is willing to give up everything for me. She knows the worst—Heaven bless her !—and is ready to face it. We must be married secretly, and I hope before a year is over my commission here will be at an end, and I shall have earned enough to go back to Dresden. My father and mother will welcome us. I have told them how sweet and good she is, and they are prepared to receive her as a daughter.

Elise. You look grave, sir. You disapprove of our marriage ?

De la V. Have you weighed the consequences ?

Wilhelm. Ah, sir, perhaps you do not know what it is to love.

De la V. Do I not ? I was a husband and a father once. My wife died of a broken heart in exile, and my children of neglect and starvation. I was driven from place to place like some hunted beast. Do you see this scar on my cheek ? It is the mark of a pistol-shot from one of the Archbishop's soldiers as they were chasing us among the mountains. I have carried

my life in my hand these twenty years. God knows how gladly I would lay it down.

Elise. Oh, do not say so, sir. Come and live with us at Dresden, and let him and me be the comfort of your old age.

De la V. [smiling]. You speak from your heart, and I thank you for it ; but no, I must not leave my flock. There are a few poor souls whom I cannot—Hark, a noise outside ! It is the gendarmes.

Elise. We are lost. Oh, can we not hide him somewhere ?

Wilhelm. Quick, quick, sir, through this door—Oh, my folly ! my cursed folly ! it is locked.

Enter Gendarmes.

1st Gendarme. Here they are, we have come upon them both at once. Hold, Pierre ; seize the young lady, while I make fast the heretic. [*Seizes De la V.*

Wilhelm. You shall not touch her. Leave her, I say, at your peril !

2nd Gendarme. Wilt thou have a sugar plum too ? Then take that. [*Cuts his right arm with a sabre.*
[*Elise faints.*

1st Gendarme. That settles two of them.

Wilhelm. Where are you taking her ?

2nd Gendarme. What business is that of yours ?

Wilhelm. I am her affianced husband.

1st Gendarme. That's just the very point. She will be well cared for, never you fear. Pretty girls always are. [*Two gendarmes carry off Elise.*

De la V. Tell him for pity's sake—I will be surety for—

1st Gendarme [gives De la Vigne a blow on the mouth]. Hold thy tongue, camisard that thou art. Thou at least wilt never see her again.

De la V. I may at least say farewell. Farewell, Wilhelm ; my own fate, be it what it may, does not grieve me so much as thine.

1st Gendarme. Pest take the long-winded old sheep. He would go on bleating up to the very butcher's door. [*Tries to push De la Vigne out of the room.*]

De la V. But what have I done? What is my offence?

2nd Gendarme. Offence ! why you *are* the offence, street offal that you are ! You cannot be yourself and not be an offence, any more than a rotten egg or a dead dog.

Wilhelm. If there is justice in Heaven you will rue this day, and you *shall* rue it.

De la V. Hush, Wilhelm ! they are but tools in another's hand. I have borne so much, nothing can hurt me now. Farewell, my dear, dear friend, think of me !

[*Gendarmes push him out, and one hits Wilhelm and stuns him.*]

Wilhelm [*alone, rises with difficulty and binds up his arm*]. O Heaven ! is it possible that God sees and tolerates all this? [*Drags himself to a seat.*] My head is dizzy. [*Staggers to the window, which he throws up.*] No signs of them ; the street is empty. No hope ! no hope ! no clue to trace her—Ah ! what is this? They dropped this folded paper in their haste : 'On receipt of this send trustworthy men of your corps to seize Elise Bonnivet, and convey her by night to the convent of Les Ursulines at Rheims ; and to arrest Paul de la Vigne, a preacher of religion, in the King's name, and convey him to the Bastille.'

Pity of Heaven ! a convent. My Elise ! There, where in His dear name Who loved mankind, Inhuman cruelties are daily wreaked,

Hearts broken, and broken purest faith and troth
'Twixt man and woman, while scarce muffled sin
Flaunts it abroad, unshamed, in thin disguise
Of complaisant religion. The Bastille !
Who knows what next, of torture or of death,
Or hateful, long, interminable life . . . ?
Oh, I am sick and faint, my dizzy thoughts
Can scarcely shape themselves ; in all this city
Have not one trusted friend, with whom to share
My sorrow's burden ; deep in my own heart
Lie love, revenge and grief. [*Reads once more.*]

This might betray me !

[*Throws paper on fire.*]

Hide, paper, there. 'Les Ursulines' and 'Rheims'
Burnt in indelibly upon my brain ;
'Bastille' and 'De la Vigne'—the words will haunt me
Despite myself. O madness ! O despair !
Ye drive me forth, as if upon the wing
Of some wild storm wind. I a faded leaf,
Hopeless, indifferent to its brittle fate,
Am whirled and whirled, I know not on what gusts
Of turbulent frenzy. Hence ! Elise ! Elise !

[*Exit hastily.*]

SCENE IV.—*An Apartment in the Dauphin's Palace.*
*Distant music ; then enter a procession of cavaliers and
ladies, the rear brought up by the DAUPHIN and
his bride.*

MARRIAGE SONG.

Now, great Hymen's torch, rekindled,
Blazes brighter than of old ;
Now, the hopes that waned and dwindled
Spring anew, and bloom in gold ;

Now, the loves and graces meeting,
Strew thy path with lilies fair ;
Cupid wafts his mother's greeting,
Rosy-perfumed, through the air.

All the gods, enthroned, effulgent,
Bend from high Olympus down ;
Jove himself, with smiles indulgent,
Deigns to weave your nuptial crown :
There the Paphian myrtle, twining
With the ivy's fadeless spray ;
There the jasmine, white and shining
Mingles with the victor's bay.

Every Muse, her skill o'ertaxing,
Hymns your praise to far-off isles ;
Each grim-visaged Fate, relaxing,
Spins for once your thread with smiles ;
Earth and heaven, with joy o'erladen,
Ring again in gladsome tone ;
Happy youth, thrice happy maiden,
All is blissful, all your own !

[*The procession enters the room, walks round it, and leaves the Dauphin and Dauphiness standing by the hearth. They salute them, the pair return the salutation, after which exeunt all but the Dauphin and the Dauphiness.*]

Dauphin [*approaching her*]. Madam, I have no words ! A day of joy

This day should be, if any joyful days
Be left me in this sad, strange, dreamlike world.
The sounds of song and mirth still palpitate
Wavelike against these walls, and dancing lights,
A thousand restless golden tongues of flame,

Still flicker round, a brilliant blaze of joy !
And you so bright, so bridal and so fair,
A glittering creature all in sheeny white,
Are you a phantom of the past ? 'Twas thus,
And yet not thus——O heavens ! I must be dumb ;
My words are worse than silence, and my tears—
Tears on a bridegroom's face ! Fair maid, forgive
me.

You whom a million hearts have welcomed, you
Worthy the welcome of the world, oh, pardon
If one poor broken heart that owes you most
Have nought to pay—a bankrupt found in love !

[*Walks away from her, and buries his face in
the back of one of the tall chairs.*

M. J. [*aside*]. 'Twas as I thought ! Oh, strange ironic
fate

For one, a trembling bride, in that first hour
Of shy, stiff, chilly newness, when her pulse
Has almost stopped, and giddy, faint, and pale,
She needs a cordial voice, a glance full-eyed,
And all the sweet imperiousness of love—
In that strange hour the bridegroom from her side
Shrinks back averse, and welcomes her with frowns.
[*To him*] My lord——

[*Walks towards the Dauphin, who starts up at
her approach.*

Dauphin. You spoke ! Oh, lady, a cruel fate
Has brought you here. You seem as one who seeks,
Athirst and hungry, fruit from withered boughs
Too sick for sunshine, and too shrunk for rain,
A brown and shrivelled mockery of his hope !
'Tis not your fault you are not she I mourn.
Impute it not to me, O tender heart
Behind those soft and pitiful blue eyes

That look so wistful and so childlike on me.
Oh, blame not him who sees in every nook
Of this twice-bridal chamber, other eyes,
And hears another best beloved voice,
And sees *her* sitting where you sat even now,
And those dark locks, so beautiful in death,
On yonder pillow. Not a corner here,
No window's ample bay, but there she stood,
No inch of wall on which her shadow fell not
And hallowed with brief kiss for evermore,
No polished square untrodden by her feet,
No picture but her eyes have pondered oft
With starlike gaze from yon dark curtained nook,
No book which those dear fingers have not turned,
No mirror not enamoured of her face,
Cheap to itself and dear to all the world !
Ah, fair and innocent stranger, bear with me ;
You seem the shadow here, a dreamy bride
Fancied by snatches her ; and as in dreams
Old friends oft wear new faces, so she wears
A stranger's face in you, and then I wake
And weep—how bitterly!—and evermore
Must weep, awakened, while the cruel day,
Too true, too cold, too heartlessly sincere,
Dawns clear and strong upon me.

M. J. O, my lord !
Stay not your tears for me ; 'tis nature speaks,
And truth and love ; and what so dear as they?
How could you love me—nay, but tolerate,
But just not hate, save for that very love
That makes you weep for her? Oh, what in you
(Since crowns are feather-weights in such a scale),
What could I value, save the constant heart

Whose worth to me is greatest when it deems
Myself most worthless, loving still to dwell
On vows eternal, not to be unmade
By death, nor yet dissolved while life shall last?
As heated things freeze fastest, so you teach me
By lovelessness itself the power of love.

Dauphin. O Heaven! to what a depth thou'st flung
me down,

When such a woman wins from me no word
Of kindness—no, nor barest courtesy.
I cannot speak, my lips are turned to stone
By petrifying grief.

M. J. My lord, I see

My entrance here but pains you; 'tis not strange.
Had I the power, to-night ten thousand leagues
Should lie i' the moonlight broad betwixt your sorrow
And my poor shamefaced presence. Yet, my lord,
Since duty's pure obedience led me hither,
I dare not hate God's handiwork, myself;
I dare not blame the wisdom or the power
That brought me, voiceless, choiceless, to your side,
Passive and helpless as the gown I wear,
That clings but where 'tis fastened—cast aside,
Lies at the mercy of each impatient foot.
Then bear with me, my lord, and fancy me
Your old wife's bridal gown, hung up in silence
(I will be silent truly)! Weep your fill,
I will not dare to sympathise, so young,
So ignorant am I; but only stay,
Waiting your pleasure, for I dare not think,
Even in a dream, even for a moment's space,
To seem the wife you mourn. Oh, pardon me,
Young, helpless, friendless, ignorant and weak.

The words I utter startle me, seem bolder
Than suits with bashful girlhood. Sir, forgive me,
And—— I am going now. [*Moving away.*]

Dauphin [*starts up and catches her dress*]. Whither?

M. J. I know not.

In these long wax-lit corridors, my voice
Will reach some lady's ear. Nay, nay, my lord,
Kneel not to me. Oh, weep not on my hand ;
Or then, if you must kneel, to Heaven, not me.

[*Addressing portrait.*]

And thou, sweet spirit, tenant here erewhile,
Still mistress of his heart—oh, add thy prayer
That we in duty's steep and thorny path
(Though not like thee, in rosy walks of love)
May bear our mutual burden patiently
Not for ourselves, but France.

Dauphin. Ay, wretched France !

Lady, your noble spirit puts to shame
My selfish sorrow. Yet—had you but known,
Had you but seen——Her eyes are on the ground,
As searching somewhat.

M. J. 'Twas a trivial thing
Dropt from my bosom, but a spray of pine
I plucked, a keepsake from my father's wood.
I wore it stealthily beneath my silks
To give me heart. [*Bursts into tears.*]

Methought a breath of home
Came in those incense-bearing tufts of green,
And made me, or would fain have made me, strong.

Dauphin [*gives her the pine spray*]. Oh, take it newly
from a bridegroom's hand,
The first true token of a duteous love,
Poor as his heart, half faded as his life,
Yet green in storms of winter as in spring.

These gems, these diamonds, lady, on your breast
The Dauphin offered to a princely bride,
The future Queen of France ; this tiny spray,
Bought by no gold, unseen by public eyes,
By my warm hand on your warm heart is laid ;
And truth, ay, love, go with it, for you love
And I love truth and love, and loving these
We cannot but be one, in truth and love.
I have no words to woo withal, my lips
Have lost the lover's tune, I cannot feign
The passion that I feel not ; yet my heart—
All that is mine to give—oh, take it to thee
With this that speaks of fatherhood and home,
A poor man's token sure, yet poverty
Is richer off than wealth in true love gifts.

M. J. And mightst thou love me with a poor
man's love,

God knows how blessed were our lot ! Meanwhile
I thank you for your gift ; heart speaks to heart
Where gold is silent, and this double pledge
I take it to me with a double love,
A memory and a prophecy of home.

[Takes off her jewels.]

Lie there, ye gems, and twinkle through the night
Uncared for, disregarded in the gleam
Of fire or lamp light ; in my heart of hearts
I keep one coffer consecrate to love.
That gift is there where never thievish hand
Can violate its shrine. The rest—who cares ?—
May deck some head, some bosom, poorer far
Than hers who once has loved.

Dauphin. So lend me now
That unadorned hand to seal my vow !

[Kisses her hand. Curtain falls.]

SCENE V.—*A Room in the Royal Palace.**The QUEEN and Madame LOUISE.*

Queen. The hour is past, and still the empty court
Basks in the silent sunlight as before ;
No footsteps save the weary sentinel,
Slow and mechanic as the brazen hand
Of yon bold-faced inexorable clock,
That moves alike through midnight, morning, noon,
By joy unhurried, undelayed by woe ;
And still she comes not.

Madame L. Mother, all my life
I never saw you troubled thus. For me,
I bless her for delaying. Well I know
How I shall watch that ruthless brazen hand
And wish some sylph, my nimble emissary,
Hung in the air on wings too fine for sight,
With laughter shrill and silvery as the song
Of highest quavering larks, scarce known from silence,
Should haste the hour more quickly to its end,
The brilliant, adamant bond of time,
The cold cold crystal crust that glitters round us,
Till her harsh presence, like a cutting wind
Blown from the black north-east, at length subsides,
And leaves us to our thaw. Ungenial time,
Fly fast ! soon bid her hither, quickly hence !

Queen. Hark, did you hear it ? There's a voice
below,
A strange unwonted footstep.

Madame L. Mother, why
This shrinking paleness ? Think, you are a queen,
And she a stranger, an unwelcome bride.

Queen. I am a fool to shrink amid my own ;

But, oh, dear child, the bracelet on her arm
Which usage bids her wear, this second day
Of bridal, bears a face—her father's face,
My father's bitter foe! How can I kiss
That cheek with lips that only speak his name
With coldness worse than hatred—take that hand,
Small, white, smooth model of a foeman's palm,
And, pressing to my bosom, take to heart
The form that makes us exiles and discrowns
My Stanislas, my king? O mocking Fate!
That sets the daughter's 'gainst the mother's lot,
My filial duty 'gainst maternal love,
Myself against myself! Ha! who goes there?
'Tis she at last!

*[Looks out into the courtyard, which is being crossed
by Madame de Pompadour, who is invisible from
the stage.]*

Madame L. The old familiar crowd
Around the reigning marchioness. How fine
And condescendingly she moves to-day!
Flaunts 'neath your very eyes, accepts the homage
That should be yours! Hats doffed and low salutes
And solemn stately reverence, no queen
Could sure have deeper! She the while betrays
Her town-bred mother everywhere; the step,
The look, the action, speak no royal blood,
A self-regardful meanness taints them all.
Yet to this painted idol must ye bow,
Great peers of France and high-engendered dames,
Manhood most glorious, womanhood so pure,
So proud! and kneel for favours at the hands
That, save for royal largesses they hold,
You'd scorn should lace your slippers.

Queen. O good heavens!
Women want patience all! the highest chief

In this, to need it thrice for others' once,
And while the fox beneath their cloak bites fiercest,
To smile most Spartan-like and lightliest tread.

Madame L. Mother, you weep; I cannot—frozen
tears,

A heart unflattered (Heaven be blest!), are mine.
I read the world as one, some rainy day
Pacing a cloister, spells on mural tombs
A long sad history of sorrows done,
While still grows the grass, soft drops the shower
In cold tranquillity.

Queen. I too had thought
To have done with useless tears, but on this day
They spring again in channels long since dried,
To find two women trampling on my heart.
As wife despised, neglected, that's old pain!
As mother and as daughter now I mourn,
My father scorned by her who wins my son,
Two precious loves both wounded in one day,
And what is left me now?

*Enter DAUPHINESS, announced by the ushers. She
curtseys very low; the Queen takes her by the hand
and kisses her.*

Queen. Welcome, my daughter,
If 'mid the roar and hubbub of delight
Which, like a sea of rapture, splashes round you,
One poor and feeble woman's voice can reach you.

M. J. The dearest, the most welcome of them all.
And yours too [*Embraces Madame Louise.*]
Oh, a thousand times I thank you.

[*They all sit down and look confused.*]
[*Aside.*] They told me she was silent, coy, and cold,
Prepared for sire's and grandsire's sake to hate me.
Her eyes even now are sad and tearful. Heart,

Poor frightened heart of mine, how wilt thou bear it?
[*Aloud, glancing at a half-painted screen.*]

Your Majesty ne'er spends an idle hour,
But here the brush, and there the needle, plays
Its fitting part; and this your workmanship,
These quaint, long-eyed, long-finger-nailed Chinese,
Beside blue waters, buoyant lotus-flowers
Spread o'er the pool where busy care lies drowned,
And memory, while sharp-beaked with dangling claws
The scarlet birds come tumbling down the sky
(One feels their fanning motion, hears their scream),
Or standing bend their long encurvèd necks
Among the reeds, where golden fish for ever,
Plain to be seen, uncaught, uncatchable,
Mock them with small, round, never-winking eyes,—
'Tis beautiful, and worthy of yourself;
And for one moment he who gazes there
Owns but the artist and forgets the queen.

Queen. Some hours, that else were weary, I have
spent,

Spoilt brushes, colours, temper, but at least
Dipped in that pool both memory and hope,
I could not drown them. You but flatter me,
Coming from Dresden, where great Raphael's hand,
Working in sacred and miraculous mood,
Is seen—Divinity à babe in arms,
And motherhood o'er angelhood upraised.

M. J. Ah! 'tis so long ago! [*Aside.*] But one bare
fortnight,
And yet a double lifetime, as it seems.

Queen. Sad hours have flagging pinions, leaden feet.
[*Sighs.*]

Madame L. But now, fair sister, may your hours fly
fast

As sunlit fountain drops, that, dancing upward
For very superfluity of joy,
Flash through the summer heavens in radiant sprays,
Ephemeral yet immortal brilliancies,
One born ere the other dies.

M. J. All such good joys
As those bright watery diamonds to their stream,
May Heaven fling back on you!

[*Madame Louise makes a deprecatory gesture. The Dauphiness puts out her hand towards her.*

Queen. You too, my daughter—have I leave to ask?—
You have a picture there, and whose the face?
[*Aside.*] Sooner or later must I bear the pain,
And why not now?

M. J. [*takes off bracelet*]. Madam, most willingly;
You know him.

Queen. Heaven! 'tis Stanislas, my father!
O child, child, child! and this you did for me?
[*Embraces her.*

Forgive me, but this kindness unforeseen
(I have known so little kindness!) cuts me deep.
[*Bursts into tears.*

M. J. Oh, let me be your daughter then, indeed,
Even as your father is my father now,
And all you cherish, all you love, are mine.
I, destitute, unfriended, turn to you,
Forget my people and my father's house,
Live wholly henceforth on your charity,
A mendicant for love. Oh, yield to me
Some little bounty—crumbs from off your board—
The poor rejected sweepings of the feast—
A tone not wholly formal now and then—
Some homelike German word that warms the heart—
One little smile—just half the tender words

You'd lavish on your spaniel ! Oh, believe me,
I have learnt to live on very little love ;
As beggars thrive (we know not how) on crusts—
Gifts, not of right, but favour, oh, vouchsafe me,
And just not quite starvation all I crave,
Then give me but that little !

Queen.

God reward you !

I thought at first that I must surely hate you ;
And now, O child ! you twine about my heart
And win me 'gainst my will. But little love
(You said it truly) in a lot like ours.
Oh, may you never taste its bitterness
As I——But I have locked my heart in silence,
And you—even you—ne'er ask me for the key.

M. J. [*to Madame Louise*]. And *you* too ?

Louise. Can you ask ? What heart is left
From Heaven is wholly yours, and in my prayers
Till death, among the dearest, your dear name
Before the Virgin and the blessed saints
For ever shall be brought in lonely hours,
Or borne on full-voiced melody to heaven,
Strong with the strength of multitudes.

M. J.

Such prayers

Are best of bridal blessings, royal gifts
Imperishable. Oh, I thank you both,
And with a lightened and a softened heart
Go forth to bear the burden of my state
For his sake, who to you alike and me
Is centre of all good beneath the sun.
Farewell.

[*Exit.*

Madame L. [*goes to window*]. Ah, clock ! what
traitorous sprite malign
Has ta'en me at my word against my will,
And spitefully hurried on that golden hand ?

Like hard-pressed thieves, the bailiff at their heels,
The stealthy strokes have sped.

Queen.

Methinks they'll go

As penniless debtor to his creditor
Until this time to-morrow, when they bring
That rosy, gold-tressed face, that oped upon me,
After long sorrow, as a daisy, furl'd
Beneath the tempest, smiles when heaven grows kind,
And greets the opening clouds with sunbright eye.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Cell in the Bastille.*

DE LA VIGNE *alone, looking at some scratches on the wall.*

De la V. It should be May—the fifteenth morn of
May—

Up yonder in the merry work-day world ;
And I suppose the sky is blue : even now
The tufted plumes of lilac are ablow,
And golden-flamed laburnum hangs its chains
O'er hawthorns, thick as snowflakes, fresh of smell ;
And tiptoe children—little ones upheld
In the tall sisters' straining arms—are fain
To clutch its trembling brilliancy of bloom ;
And there are songs and dances on the greens,
And girl-processions, blue and white, that mock
The woodruff and forget-me-not, flow forth

To honour Mary—banners stream afar,
And flowers——O God ! and I am here alone,
Starved, dark, and sunless. Nine long months have
passed—

Chill, piercing nights of winter, when I lay
Sleepless with aching cold—bleak, dreary morns—
Long, dull, and feverish afternoons—and still
No change, no hope ! I seem as one that walks
By some dark subterranean flood, whose voice
He hears, but sees no ripple and no gleam,
And knows not where it leads him, nor how long
'Twill wind—he with it—underneath the earth ;
And if 'twill reach the daylight fair he knows not,
Nor if, with low reverberating roar,
In some sea cave 'twill mingle gloomily
With the dark ocean, where, at flow of tide,
Swift-rolling inward, one o'ermastering wave—
Deep-booming, thunderous, passionately poured
Down the long-throated, foam-illuminated vault—
Will seize and toss and whirl him to his doom.
I hear a sound [*pauses*]—two voices, then a murmur.
Hark ! there are feet ! I hear the gateway clang—
The lock turns——Wilhelm ! Wilhelm !

Enter WILHELM, carrying wallet, &c.

Wilhelm.

De la Vigne !

At last, at last I wind you in these arms ;

But, oh—how you are changed !

[*Gives a fee to the gaoler, who departs.*

De la V.

Art thou a vision ?

No, for thy hand is throbbing flesh, and warm.

Oh, 'tis too good, too good !—Can I believe it ?

Sit yonder, where the narrow ray of light

Falls on you. Oh, to feast me on your face !
Yet you are graver than of old—in dreams
Your face was brighter, younger——But we waste
The precious time. Oh, tell me, tell me all !
What angel brought you to my loneliness,
And what the tidings you are sent to bear ?

Wilhelm. But half an hour is granted me to stay.
I pined to see you, but no way seemed clear.
At length I wrought a lovely porcelain vase,
Which, one auspicious moment, caught the glance
Of Marshal Saxe, my countryman. He praised
The costly work ; what could the workman do
But lay it humbly at his feet ? He smiled
(Such condescension greatness yields the small)
And bade me ask him in return a boon
Worthy his greatness and my gift. You guess
The favour I entreated ; and, dear friend,
This moment pays me, overpays me all
Labour and toil and effort—crowned at last
With this one glimpse, this fleeting glimpse, of you.

De la V. God bless you for it ! These are tears of
weakness

Of one half-starved in body and in soul.
Tell me — Elise ? ah, how your face is changed !—
You have no good tidings ?

Wilhelm. None—nor bad, nor good :
They keep her close ; she walks at times abroad
In the high-walled convent garden. Once I stole
A hasty day from business, and to Rheims,
Though knowing well how hopeless was my quest,
Where no Court favour could relax the stern
Hard rule that woman over woman holds,
I wandered, pacing up and down the street
Before the Ursulines. No face appeared

At door or window, not one living sign ;
No girlish voice was singing up on high ;
No flower, no birdcage, I might fancy hers,
Decked the dull front. A chestnut tree I climbed,
And by the soft and budding green concealed,
Gazed downward on the convent garden lawn.
An hour I sat and watched, but still she came not.
The starlings chattered, mocking me ; the clock
Chimed quarters and half hours, the voice of Time
Most audible when Time slips fruitless by,
Till one old wrinkled woman, sent for herbs,
Basket on arm, came out, bent o'er the beds
Of scented thyme and marjoram, then raised
Her head, and saw, and shrieked at me aloud.
I could have laughed, had I the heart for laughter,
To see the horror in her face. She shrieked,
But ere'a crowd could gather I was gone,
Slipped down a narrow bypath and escaped,
Scarce glad of my own safety. Home when reached
Seemed full of emptiness ; the very seats,
The couches, tables, implements of work,
All seemed to say, ' And hast thou seen Elise ? '
And all the visionary towers in air
That I had reared—of blushes and of smiles,
Soft finger touches musical as sound,
If sound could be conceived that thrilled the heart
Without the intervention of the ear,
The daydream of her presence, and that kiss,
For ever being given, which never yet
Has touched her exquisite cheek—before my soul
Swam like the visions of a sick man's brain.
My morn of hope arose once more to mock me,
All seemed unchanged, but I myself. Methought
I could have borne it better else ! Despair

Almost o'ermastered me. But shame upon me,
Who breathe warm air and see the living sun,
When you, O father ! linger here in gloom
Unmurmuring ! Tell me how it fares with you ?

De la V. I know not. Sometimes darkness palpable

Bears down on my encumbered soul ; a weight
No longer to be borne. I weep, I pray,
Or strive to pray, and yet no gleam of light
Comes to my poor, forsaken, arid heart.
God hides His face from me, and man is dumb.
And then again descends on me—I know not
By what beneficent power, but this I know,
No will of mine creates it or destroys—
A rapturous mood that lifts me out of life,
Transfigures pain, despondency absorbs,
Blots out the sickly horror of the dark ;
Nor feel I aught of hunger or of cold,
My limbs are not my own, and time itself
Seems fused, as in a sunset raining gold
Down from the western firmament, all shapes
Melt ;—earth is lost in heaven's triumphant hour.
Seest thou yon circle?—'tis a shapeless round,
Scratched by a hand unskilful—more than that,
A hand that trembled, half with inward joy
And half with weakness—'tis Eternity,
It *means* Eternity, and marks a day,
An hour of such unutterable bliss
As happy Paul when rapt to Paradise
Scarce knew ! It passed and left me, but the
thought,
The memory ne'er will leave me till I die ;
And when I die, belike 'twill come again.
Meanwhile——

Wilhelm. Meanwhile—— [*Bell tolls.*

O Time, by malice winged,
Brief space thou leavest me. Tell me this, dear friend,
Is there no way, no opening for escape,
Nought I may do, petition, prayer or bribe ;
No heart to touch—— ?

De la V. Vex not thyself for me.
I am going where no gaoler with his keys,
No pacing sentry, no encircling strength
Of moat or bastion with loud-throated guns,
No chains, no bars can stay me. Think on me,
But think not sorrowfully of thy friend ;
And when thy loved one, to thine arms restored
(That day will come), remembers thee of me,
Tell her I blessed her in this parting hour
And feared—not death—but life !

Enter GAOLER.

Gaoler. The time is past.
No moments more are granted here.
[*Wilhelm takes De la Vigne's hand and says nothing.*
De la V. Adieu !
Think on me, sorrow not ; the time is short,
And nearer, brighter grows th' eternal world.
Till then farewell, farewell. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Versailles.* 1751.

Before the Dauphin's Apartments. Evening.

The Sentinel on guard, and a Chairman.

Chairman. Hallo, Pierre ! still going of thy old rounds ?

Sentinel. Ay, truly, Jacques. What's good enough

for the sun and the moon is good enough for me. The King, too, what does he do but go on his rounds—Versailles to Fontainebleau, Fontainebleau to Versailles ; ding dong, ding dong, to and fro for ever ? Going rounds is all the fashion. What does thy lady do but go on her rounds—from home to Court, from the Court to the playhouse, from the playhouse to the church, and so back again ? We are all turnspits nowadays, and many of us smell the joint without ever being allowed to snatch at a mouthful of meat for ourselves. For thee, Jacques, thy rounds are from the courtyard to the Blue Dragon, and from the Blue Dragon, about half-past midnight, to the turn-up bedstead in the attic. What news hast thou to-night ?

Chairman. Why, nothing, except that the world grows poorer every day. Bread's gone up again, and it's lucky if wages don't go down.

Sentinel. Thou hast a brand new livery, though.

[*Turns him round by the shoulder.*]

Chairman. Yes, but you should see the ragged shirt underneath. Gold lace outside and tatters within ; that's the way of us all, and an empty stomach to keep the rags company. Whew, whew—how cold it is ! I haven't had a dinner, to call a dinner, these three days.

Enter DAMIENS.

Sentinel. There's a wretch whose very look would take away a man's appetite—that hook-nosed fellow there.

Chairman. You may well say that. Have you never seen him before ?

Sentinel. No ; and I don't care how long it is

before I see him again. What a scarecrow face it is ! Worse than the black villains who are roasting St. Lawrence in the picture. He looks as if he would stick at nothing.

Chairman. No, nor stick to anything, either ; you may be sure of that.

Sentinel. What's his name ?

Chairman. How should I know ? They call him Guillemart now : half thief, half madman. He has been in more places than he has fingers, and got turned out of them for one thing and another. I know a gentleman myself as he robbed of fifty louis, and now you may be sure he is not skulking about here for nothing.

Sentinel. Preserve us ! what a dead man's face he has !

Chairman. That's his way when he has just been bled, as the fancy takes him now and then. Last time I saw him, his face was as red as your waistcoat. Here he comes ; I shall pretend to be asleep, so as he mayn't know me. I've seen enough of the fellow already, and he would be an ugly customer if he picked a quarrel with one.

Damiens [*coming closer, muttering to himself*]. Enough, enough ; the bough is ripening, the fruit soon must fall and dash its red juice on the ground ; only one shake of the twig, and there it lies.

[*Makes a threatening gesture at the palace.*]

Sentinel. Hallo ! what are you about there, you fellow, shaking your fist at the Dauphin's window ?

Damiens. I did not know it was the Dauphin's window. Let him take care of himself, let him look to himself and his black-coated Jesuitical friends.

Sentinel. What do you mean by that, sirrah ?

Damiens. Why, what did I say? what did I say? I meant no harm. Do you see how red yonder sky is? It seems to me as red as blood.

Sentinel. Then it must be somewhat in your eyes that makes it so.

Damiens. What's that noise out yonder?

Sentinel. Why, I did not hear any.

[A child's cry is heard.]

Damiens. There, again.

Sentinel. Well, it's more like a baby crying than anything else. But what of that? If you'd had half a dozen on 'em, like me, you'd think little enough of it.

Damiens. Birth to-day, death to-morrow;
This for sin, and that for sorrow.

[Walks up and down, muttering to himself.]

Sentinel. I say, friend, if it's all the same to you, I'd rather have your room than your company.

Damiens. Many people have said that.

Sentinel. Then why do you stand gaping at the great staircase, as if you expected his Majesty to be coming down just to give your ugly eyes a sight of him?

Damiens. That's the way he comes down, then, is it?

Sentinel. I don't know what you mean about coming down. He's not coming to-day, that's certain. Now be off with you, or I'll wake my mate, who I think knows a little more about you than you'd wish. Here Jacques, Jacques Perrault, what are you dreaming of?

[Damiens glides to the back of the stage.]

Chairman [muttering in his sleep]. Madame de Lauraguaye's chair stops the way.

Sentinel [walks up and down, singing].

If I were a king and you were a queen,
With a trol-lol-lol-la-la,
We'd both go about more fit to be seen,
With &c.;
If I were an abbot and you were a nun,
With &c.,
By hook or by crook we would have some fun,
With——

Enter DAUPHIN hastily.

Hallo, who's there?

Dauphin [hurriedly]. Come, come, I want you, come at once.

Sentinel. I shall do as I please about that. [*Sings.*

If I were a lady and you were a lord,
With a trol-lol-lol-la-la,
I'd wager my fan against your sword,
With——

Dauphin [pulls him by the sleeve]. Fellow, do you hear, or do you not?

Sentinel. Hear you! I should think I did; but what of that? Mercy upon us! 'tis Monsieur the Dauphin! Oh, what does your Royal Highness think of me? I took you for a—no, I didn't—I—I——

Dauphin. Never mind, only come at once.

Sentinel. I shall be shot for a deserter if I do, asking your Royal Highness's pardon. I dare not budge till they come to relieve guard.

Dauphin. Fellow, fellow! is this a time for ridiculous scruples? I tell you my wife [*breathlessly*]—an heir—to the throne of France—born this very hour!

Sentinel. Long life to him, and you too, your Highness! But sir, I wouldn't hurry myself so if I was you.

Take my word for it, they'll both do well enough. I've had six on 'em, so I ought to know.

Dauphin. Have you no sense? can you not understand? We want witnesses.¹ I cannot find a soul. You must come this instant, and you too—you—what's your name?

[*Catches Chairman by the collar and shakes him.*

Chairman [*sleepily*]. Come up with the link, boy! Look sharp! Madame de Lauraguaye's chair stops the way.

Dauphin. Do you hear me? Wake up this instant, every moment is worth millions. Come along with me.

Chairman [*rubbing his eyes*]. Noa, noa, my lady will be a-wanting of me directly. Oh-aw-aw. [*Yawns.*

Dauphin. I tell you, I want you, my man, as a witness to the birth of my child.

Chairman. Oh, if that's all, what is there to make such a piece of work about? Tiresome brats! I never knew one on 'em yet that did not bear witness to theirselves pretty quick; and so will yours, my boy, you may depend on it.

Sentinel. Hold, Jacques, thou blockhead! 'Tis Monsieur the Dauphin.

Chairman. So it is! My stars, who'd ever a'thought of that? I'm sure I beg your pardon, sir, a hundred times over; but what with being out late o' nights, and one thing and another, my sight is not so good as it was.

Dauphin. Never mind all that, only come.

Chairman. I ought to have known your Royal Highness, seeing as how you once gave me half a louis for taking a stone out of your horse's foot in the forest of Fontainebleau. My old woman——

¹ This incident is a literal fact.

Dauphin. You are an old woman yourself. I'll make it twenty times as much if you'll only come directly. Every minute is more precious than gold.

[Again pulls him by the sleeve.]

Chairman. Well, Pierre, what dost'ee say about it?

Sentinel. You may go if you like, but his Royal Highness knows I shall catch it if I stir from my place. A fellow like you ain't of any particular consequence, but I'm a public institution.

[Settles himself with his pike.]

Dauphin. I tell you we must have two witnesses. I'll speak to your captain ; I'll take it all on myself. You shall each have twentypieces of gold if you come at once, and not a sou if you keep me waiting an instant longer. The crown of France may depend on it.

Sentinel. Well, then, sir, well, we'll see about it. Lie there, my friend.

[Lays down his pike.]

Chairman. And stand there, my enemy. *[Gives a shove to the sedan chair.]* Our fortunes are made, Pierre, let thy colonel and my lady say what they will. *[Exeunt all but Damiens, who comes forward and takes up the pike, and makes passes at their retreating figures.]*

Damiens. So ! now, I am guardian of your safety. I'll look well to it ; trust me for that. *[Feels the edge of the blade.]* Sharp, sharp, a pretty thing to draw the blood of honest men who come a little too close to this den of robbers. Ah, I'll have you all in my power yet. There is a great day coming, the news of which shall ring through France. Not that puny cry of an infant an hour old, but the last agonised shriek of slaughtered tyrants. Look to yourselves, ay, look

to yourselves, and trust me I'll look to you. Down,
down, down you shall go like this !

[Flings the pike violently on the pavement, and exit.]

SCENE III.—*A Room in the Dauphin's House.*

*The DAUPHIN is seen seated at a music desk, the
DAUPHINESS beside him with a child on her knee.*

Dauphin sings.

When the hours of life are sweetest,
In thy young and buoyant day,
Then, bethink thee, soul, 'twere meetest,
Nothing here can last for aye.

When the cares of life invade thee,
And thy hair is streaked with grey,
Keep this warning thought to aid thee—
Nothing here can last for aye.

When thy dear ones' warm embraces
Clasp thee, close as dear ones may,
Think, amid those loving faces,
Nothing here can last for aye.

So ere death, the cold and cheerless,
Turns thy lips to pallid clay,
Thou mayst say, in accents fearless,
'Death, thou canst not last for aye.'

M. J. A sad song, dearest.

Dauphin. Do you not know that the happiest people always sing the saddest songs? When I am very miserable, you will hear me whistling a jig. Or let us say [*enter Marshal SAXE and M. LANDSMATH*] a military march. Here they come. *Fortemque Gyan,*

fortemque Cloanthum! Welcome, welcome, both of you!

M. J. Dear Uncle Maurice, welcome back, covered with glory!

M. Saxe. By your Royal Highnesses' leave [*kissing her*], we soldiers, even when the articles of peace are signed, always reserve our rights to this kind of booty.

Dauphin. Unfortunately in this respect the enemy gain little by making reprisals. You have it all your own way, Marshal.

M. Saxe. Yes, I generally have it all my own way, your Royal Highness. And so you have been singing! We heard you as we came upstairs. Rather a melancholy ditty, was it not?

Landsmath. I tell his Royal Highness he might as well be a chantry priest or a minor canon, he spends so much time at the music desk.

M. Saxe. Well, I don't mind a bit of a tune myself, not a lackadaisical thing like that, which puts one in mind of an old dog with the toothache, but something that's got life in it—something that keeps going, spinning along like this.

[*Hums an air, and keeps time by switching the top of his boot.*]

M. J. Hush, uncle, you'll wake the baby! We are not used to your drums and cannonades here.

M. Saxe. And so, young master, you're to be the master of us all some day!

Dauphin. He is already.

M. Saxe. No, sir, your turn comes first.

Dauphin. Oh, no! Pardon me. I am only like one of those tapers on rods you see in churches. The sacristan cherishes them at first, keeps the draught off with his hands, and makes the most of the poor little spark, till he gets to the high altar and lights it up,

and then you know, Landsmath, puff! out goes the taper, it has done its work. That is just what I was—a link in the succession, nothing more. Blow me out now. No one will miss me.

M. Saxe. Nay, nay, your Royal Highness. This is not the way you used to talk when we were comrades in arms together. Why, how full of spirits you were, to be sure, at Fontenoy! I think I see you now, when I was going about in my wicker chair, suffering tortures with my old complaint, and a bullet in my mouth to keep down the raging thirst. Plague on that English column! how it came on—roll, roll, roll, like a great steady wave! They pressed us hard that time, didn't they, Landsmath?

Landsmath. Yes; if it had not been for our splendid artillery they and the blue bonnets¹ might have made it awkward work for you, Marshal.

M. Saxe. Awkward work! It *was* awkward work. It makes me hot even now to think of it. But [*to the Dauphin*] there were you, a fine young fellow of sixteen, up to anything, dashing about in a fine new uniform at the head of your troops. Ah! I envied you, laughing as merrily as if you were out hunting, splashed with mud, cannon balls flying, men falling all about you, and you crying, 'Well, if it is not anything worse than *this*——' Ah, my niece, he was a fine fellow in those days.

M. J. So he is now.

Landsmath. Your Royal Highness never said a truer word.

Dauphin. Ah! Marshal, those days are gone for ever. I am now only a Court appendage, a dressed-up nonentity. You have had a career. Europe rings with your fame. England dreads you. The Empress

¹ The 'Black Watch' gained its first laurels at Fontenoy.

trembles before you. The young King of Prussia looks on you as his master in the art of war. France idolises you. While for me, what is there left? Between the King on the throne and the infant in the cradle, what am I but a dull parenthesis in history, on which future ages will barely deign to cast a momentary glance? What else can one call this life of dreary splendour, powerless to prevent evil, and almost equally helpless to forward good?

M. Saxe. But his Majesty used to be on the warmest terms with you.

Dauphin. That warmth cooled as soon as he got back to Paris. But I will not speak of him, Marshal. I ought to carry a bullet in my mouth like you; not to quench thirst, but to remind me to hold my tongue.

M. Saxe. Come, come, don't be so melancholy, you who are young and have all the world before you.

Dauphin. I see I shall only depress cheerful people like you. You will excuse me if I leave you.

[*Exit Dauphin.*]

Landsmath. He's terribly hipped to-day is his Royal Highness. But he's right about the King, worse luck! You might almost as well mention death to him, as his successor.

M. Saxe. Better indeed! If he is like what he used to be, he is fonder of talking about death than might be expected, all things considered.

Landsmath. Right, Marshal! And to me, who hate the very sight of a churchyard, and shudder whenever I pass an undertaker's shop. Did I ever tell you how he sent me to see the dead body of my confessor?—a worthy old Lazarist, a man whom I really loved, and, poor fellow, I used to fancy he cared for me. You know in that Order they expose the faces at funerals.

M. J. Horrible! And he made you go and see him?

Landsmath. Insisted on it. Well, I went, of course. As I told him, 'It shall never be said that I disobeyed my sovereign's orders.' Well, I need not describe it to your Royal Highness. I went, and that was enough.

M. Saxe. And what did the Well-beloved say to you when you got back? On my honour, I would rather face a regiment of live dragoons than one dead monk. But what did he say to you?

Landsmath. You know his old inquisitive way. He asked me what I thought of it. I see him now, kicking out his foot with the diamond buckle on one of those gilt blue satin footstools, and just twiddling the ends of his point lace cravat. 'What did I think of it?' said I. 'What did I think of it? I thought, says I, that your Majesty and I are no great things after all.'

M. Saxe. Right, Landsmath, very right [*patting him on the back*]; you had him there for once in a way.

Landsmath. Yes, I think I had him there. He turned almost as blue as the footstool.

M. Saxe. Yet you know Heaven will never be hard on a man of his quality. Distinctions must be kept up even in the grave.

Landsmath. Oh, of course, of course. But that is by-and-by.

M. J. Ah, well, uncle, it is what we must all think of sooner or later.

M. Saxe. The later the better, then, I should say. Now there went a man who need not fear Death [*looking at the door by which the Dauphin has gone out*].

M. J. You don't fear him, uncle? you have met him often enough.

M. Saxe. Ay, but don't you know how one is shy of an old friend when he wears a new aspect? I was not shy of you at Dresden. I am here. So I am used to meeting Death on a battle-field, but I should shrink from him if he came and sat on the edge of my bed in a hospital. We are not all saints like your husband, my niece.

Landsmath. No more of this, Marshal. When shall we have another of our trials of strength?

M. J. Ah, uncle! and when will you make a corkscrew out of an old nail for me? I have been boasting of your feats to our ladies.

M. Saxe. Ah! by the way, who was the little girl with black eyes with you yesterday? I forget her name. I forget everything now. If I had been a horse, I should have gone to the kennels long ago, like my poor old Flora (you remember Flora?). Landsmath, there, I dare say, has not been throwing any obstinate fellows into mud-carts lately?

Landsmath. No, no! I'm a poor creature to what I was. Still, I don't mean to die yet awhile—not as long as there's such good snuff as this in the world [*takes a pinch out of the Marshal's box*], and an old friend's hand to give it me, and—best of all—such a fair lady as this to smile upon me [*bows to the Dauphiness*]. Well, Marshal; I will leave you and her Royal Highness together. Adieu—my service to your Royal Highness. [*Exit Landsmath.*]

M. Saxe. Good-bye, old friend—it does me good to see your hearty old face again. And now, my niece, how do you get on with your husband? You are grown a thousand times handsomer than you were.

There's no fear of any one setting up as your rival, I imagine.

M. J. Oh, uncle, he is a million times too good for me. If I could only make him happy!

M. Saxe. You'll never do that. To begin with, he hasn't got happiness in him. At his age, a young fellow wants to be alive and on the move. I know I could no more have stayed at home dangling at the tail of a procession, and perhaps killing a stag now and then by way of variety, than I could have changed places with the baby on your lap. But music, now, he loves music—melancholy people always do.

M. J. And books—you know he's a great scholar.

M. Saxe. Oh, is he? There I can't follow you. That's quite out of my line of attack. Those academy fellows have just offered me a—hum—hum—whatever do they call it?—(as I said just now, my memory is gone)—a place at their mess, you know! 'Twould suit me about as well as a ring would a tom-cat. But no doubt there are people who like that kind of thing. No accounting for tastes. It seems odd to us that Russians like lamp oil, but I've seen the rogues licking their thick lips after it. And if he likes books, so much the better for him!

M. J. You see, he dare not meddle with politics.

M. Saxe. No, no—of course not. *A propos*, how do he and *Pompon* get on?

M. J. How can you ask me? Not at all.

M. Saxe. Forgive me, but you are wrong there. If you do not pay your court to her, she'll be certain to thwart you. And she knows how to do it, too. The woman can see with her long eyes as well as languish with them, and do a good deal with that

pretty mouth of hers besides smiling and pouting. You had better not make her your enemy.

M. J. But it cannot be helped. My husband can barely endure to be in the same room with her.

M. Saxe. Well, niece, we must put up with things as they are. We must build our fortifications as the land lies, and take the world as we find it.

M. J. Pardon me. If we did that, every generation would find things a little worse than they were before. Would it not, baby? And then what would become of you?

M. Saxe. Ah, there's no arguing with a woman when she has a child in her arms. You are all queens then, and you know it. And, speaking of that, I have a pair of lovers whom I wish to place under your protection—a countryman of mine (a fellow-Protestant) and a pretty little Elise whom an old harpy of an aunt has whisked off to the convent of Les Ursulines to be out of his way. Could you not get the order countermanded? They would go and live at Dresden. Come, niece, if you put on the look I have seen you put on sometimes, the King cannot refuse you.

M. J. Ah, uncle, if you wish to prevent the accomplishment of any wish of yours, ask me to further it. My husband and I have no power at Court.

M. Saxe. What then?—must he try his luck in the enemy's camp?

M. J. I see no other prospect for him.

M. Saxe. Then I must tell him so. But you must have played your cards badly. [*To baby.*] Fare thee well, little man, and grow up better than thy good-for-nothing grandfather and thy scapegrace of a great-uncle. When you show him this [*pointing to his own*

portrait on the wall], you will doubtless point me out as a bad example to be avoided.

M. J. Far from it, uncle. I shall say, 'There was a brave man, whose courage thou must try to imitate some day.' For the rest I shall say nothing.

M. Saxe. De mortuis——! Ah, I shall be dead by that time. Well, as Landsmath said, we must make the most of life while it lasts. Good-bye, my niece, and remember my advice.

M. J. Farewell, uncle. I shall do my best to forget it; but I won't forget you. *[Exeunt.]*

ACT III.

1752—6.

SCENE I.—*Bellevue.*

A garden lit up with Chinese lamps. Music. Promenaders &c. LANDSMATH and Madame de Pompadour's Lady-in-waiting.

Landsmath. Ah, madam, what an unexpected privilege! I had some difficulty in tearing myself from the supper table to-night and my friend the Abbé. Had I known that *this* awaited me, I should not have hesitated.

Lady-in-waiting. Yes, the fireworks are charming indeed.

Landsmath. They might be, did not your eyes extinguish them.

L. W. Or the flashes of your wit.

Landsmath. I am only the gunpowder: you, madam, are the spark that sets light to it.

L.W. That little compliment came out so very neatly that I am sure you must have tried it on some one else before. How many besides, pray, sir, have you said that to in the course of this evening?

Landsmath. I protest, none; when the spark has once fallen, there is an end of the gunpowder. [*The King and Madame de Pompadour and attendants appear at the back of the stage.*] Seriously, madam, I have only just arrived to add my congratulations to those of all Paris on the Dauphin's recovery from his dangerous illness.

L.W. Oh, yes, we are all very glad, of course—especially my mistress, the giver of the feast [*indicating Madame de Pompadour with her fan*]. She looks pleased, does she not?

Landsmath. I don't know about that, madam, but one must keep up appearances.

L.W. Yes, indeed. Who knows how soon she may be at his mercy? Ah! did you see how his Majesty stumbled then? His step is not so firm nor his sight so good as it used to be. Who knows what one false step——?

Landsmath. Don't mention them, they are too common. In morals, in politics, in *menuets de la cour*——

L.W. Hush, hush, the music begins!

SONG.

Poets, famed for song and fable,
Tell how Orpheus, long ago,
Harp in hand, in garments sable,
Wandered through the shades below;
Brought Eurydice, his dearest,
Halfway up to light's domain;
Then, when hope was shining clearest,
Lost her, ne'er to find again.

Music over death victorious
But one moment then might be ;
Now, great Prince, triumphant, glorious,
Loud she lifts her voice for thee ;
Thou, like Hercules, assailing
Monsters in a direful strife,
O'er their poisoned fangs prevailing,
Upward spring'st to fuller life.

Grisly Pluto smiled disdainful,
Deeming thee his destined prey ;
Cerberus, crouched, grim-eyed and baneful,
Grudged each instant of delay.
Charon stood with oar suspended,
Waiting with malignant glance.
On that hour how much depended,
Cæsar, both for thee and France !

Now the gloomy past is over !
Fair Hygeia's rosy face
Smiles to see her care recover—
Tears to laughter yield apace.
Votive wreaths and offerings duteous
Lay we on her friendly shrine ;
All things glorious, great and beauteous,
Throng her steps, for all are thine !

[*During this song the King and Madame de Pompadour pass over the stage—she coquetting with him, and endeavouring to secure his attention, which occasionally wanders off to others.*

Landsmath. Magnificent, truly magnificent, is it not, madam ?

L. W. Sublime, indeed ! And that boy's voice—where can I have heard it before ? I am sure I know it.

Landsmath. You are right, madam. It is Robert, one of the children of the Chapel Royal.

L. W. What a treat for him after singing those tedious *misereres* and *recordares*. Now this is all life and spirit!

Landsmath. Of the purest classical taste. I cannot think how the fellows invent such things! But, madam, only look here. What an idea! What a conception! This surpasses anything one could have imagined.

[*A large transparency of the Dauphin, surrounded by monsters and triumphing over them, is exhibited. Shouts of applause.*]

L. W. The real Dauphin ought to be here. But I do not see him, or any of that party.

Landsmath. No, madam. That Dauphin [*pointing to the effigy*], transparent though he be, is not so transparent as the one of flesh and blood, at least in showing his dislikes in a certain quarter [*glancing at Madame de Pompadour*]. Not much love lost on either side, I fancy; though this festival in honour of him is all at her expense.

L. W. She's going off a little, don't you think?

Landsmath. Perhaps, madam, it is not that she has gone off, but others [*bowing*] have come on. But I remember her ten years ago——

L. W. Ten years ago! Why, I was at the convent school then.

Landsmath. That, madam, may easily be conceived. But I am afraid I must confess I remember her when she first came to Court. There was a freshness, an elasticity about her then which now seems to have vanished. She had three styles of beauty, so we all agreed, and was irresistible in all. At one moment

she was calm and serene, with a marble dignity like that of a lovely statue ; then, before you had time to grow weary of it, she would burst into playfulness and animation. *Now*, her eyes hardly seem to belong to her.

L. W. That's true. Her face, as I can testify, is one solid mask of white and red paint.

Landsmath. But then, every muscle of her face, every changeful tint on her beautiful cheek, was in sympathy. Such fire ! such vivacity ! such art ! Then in a moment there would come a change ; a soft languor would steal over her, her very attitude become pensive, her eyes would droop with melting softness. I am not sure that she was not most dangerous then.

[As he speaks, lady unconsciously changes her own manner and look in imitation of his description.]

L. W. I can well believe it. But she certainly must be altered since those days. There is a hardness about her . . . !

Landsmath. Then her endless variety of costumes. One day a shepherdess, another a nun, another an opera dancer. The King was in love with twenty women, not with one, in her person. And our good queen is, as you know—at least, would be—if she were not a queen, just the least bit—let us say monotonous.

L. W. Yes, poor dear ! And as for absence of mind——

Landsmath. Perhaps she puts that on. It is convenient to be blind and deaf sometimes.

L. W. She asked me the other day how my grandmother was, who has been dead these two years, though she had actually condescended to accept an

enamelled snuff-box in memory of her. Ah! look, sir, there's something gone wrong there.

[*Indicates the King and Madame de Pompadour.*

Landsmath. She has a thunderstorm in her face. See how it lowers!

L. W. The lightning will fall on that girl in cherry-coloured taffety, whom the King is speaking to.

Landsmath. And no wonder. What a lovely creature! a very nymph, one of the train of Calypso.

L. W. I think better of Calypso's taste myself. But poor child! people have been poisoned for less.

Landsmath. Ah! see, she has got him away. The nymph in red is sent to the rightabout. I wonder if the pretty child will come down here. I should like to look at her a little closer. Shall we walk in that direction?

L. W. As you please. I shall stay where I am. The crowd spoils one's dress.

Landsmath. See, here is another brilliant display! How the people are all shouting!

[*Another transparency is shown, bearing the initial L under a crown. Cheering and shouting. Curtain falls.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Dauphin's House.*

The DAUPHIN on a couch, his wife working beside him.

M. J. So silent, love, to-night! The darkness
grows;

The nurse's pacing lullaby has ceased,

Long far, and faint through yonder doorway heard,
As, like a spinner to some tedious chant,
For ever pacing by his wheel, she moved,
Babe in her arms, and slumber in her voice ;
And still you sit so meditative mute,
That you yourself might be a drowsy babe,
With great fixed eyes, beneath a slumberous charm ;
Dreaming, yet masked in wakefulness.

Dauphin.

Ah, dearest,

Which is the waking, which the dream ? I ask.
I know not what I thought of when you spoke,
For I was looking—just between those boughs,
See yonder, o'er the roof-tree—at a star,
A starry cluster, slowly blossoming,
Bud after bud, from nothingness to beauty,
As lily bells unfold themselves by stealth,
And *are*, while yet we know not ; and I thought
It wanted but a little, and my soul
To-night had been among those stars—had watched,
Believe it, dearest, from whatever sphere,
Or high or low, of God's mysterious heaven,
You—not as now, with sickness' jaded eye,
From this soft pillow which your kindness spreads,
But with the piercing and untroubled gaze
Of disembodied and enfranchised love.
But God and you have willed it otherwise—
'What woman wills, God wills it.'

M. J.

Hush, my dearest.

You would not, if you could, have left me here,
A friendless woman 'mid a world of spies,
Detractors, critics, fair-faced enemies,
Foul-tongued——! God heard my prayer, and gave
you back.
And now, oh, fling not thanklessly away

That gift of life and blessing. Yet you sigh.
You could not sigh, did you but love like me.

Dauphin. God knows I love you, dearest, not with
love

That is but gratitude in rich disguise !
Such thanks, too deep for language, had been thine
Were I a leprous galley slave, and you.
A blue-gowned, white-coifed, daughter of Saint Paul,
Angel of life, beside the couch of death !
But gratitude must fade when love is nigh,
As starlight in the sun ! I thank you not,
For why ? I could not thank myself—and you
Are but a better, holier self to me.
Oh, my own wife, the heaven you make on earth
But makes that other heaven more near, more true.
Sweet is the prophecy and foretaste here !
How sweet must be fulfilment, and my sighs
Are yearnings fostered by your tenderest love.

[*Kisses her hand.*]

M. J. Hark ! far-off music, and a rush of feet,
And up among the still and starry host
A darting rocket flashes, curves and bursts.
See what a twinkling golden shower it scatters !
Then all is darkness. Nay, out yonder, see
Just where the sky is purplest, dancing lights,
A maze of ruby drops, a rain of fire,
A quivering, shifting, many-coloured spray,
A fountain flinging jewels. Hark again !
A shout would rend a catacomb of graves,
And wake whole generations of the dead !

Enter Du Muy.

Ha ! There's a face I've longed for. Ever welcome,
Brother Du Muy, and never more than now.

Du Muy. Madam, your leave to place me at your feet.

M. J. Kind friend, no ceremonies here. You see me,

Thank Heaven! at last no princess, but a nurse.

Du Muy. Most glorious title of true womanhood!
And sure most like the angels! Gracious lady,
And you, oh, my dear lord—I cannot speak;
God gives you back! I thank Him, and through her.
All France, dear lady, henceforth kneels before you,
As mariners, saved beyond all hope of safety,
Kneel to the saint who heard their anguished vows
'Twixt wave and rock. Your votaries are we all;
What offerings rich enough?

M. J. For me, but silence,
My lord, and love for him. Awhile I'll leave you.

[*Exit Dauphiness.*]

Dauphin. You've frightened her away with her own praise.

Du Muy, there goes a woman in ten thousand,
A crown, a kingdom in herself! *You* speak,
But I for love am stupefied and dumb.
That face, how think you, is it pale?

Du Muy. Almost
As pale as is your Highness', yet withal
A differing shade; one languorous and weak,
The other thin, o'erwearied and o'erwatched.
Bring back the roses to your cheek, and hers,
Be sure, will bloom again.

Dauphin. Du Muy, that face
Has been an angel's o'er me as I lay,
Has gleamed through tossing fever nights upon me
Soft as the fitfully revealed moon
Gleams on the uproar of the restless sea.

Her hand—oh, what a hand it is!—brought ease
When all things fretted else. No other hand
Or bore me food or medicine : none could soothe,
None could caress, none minister like it.
Oh, as I lay there, oft the thought would come,
And art thou he, and was there once a time
When thou'dst have given a kingdom to be free
From taking it in thine ? Ah, she has conquered,
And now sits thronèd in my heart for ever,
Sole sovereign and true empress of my life.
And yet, Du Muy, and yet—oh, would those sparks
And fiery coruscations that even now
Dance in the evening sky, had flashed to heaven
Bright with some other message—not of me !
They tell me that to-night in yonder garden
There stands a luminous Dauphin all of flame,
A glittering, lightsome, bright, ephemeral toy,
A mere black framework soon, a skeleton
Too gladly then effaced by pitying night.
Oh, could I fade to darkness as he fades,
Slip from life's brilliant pageant unawares,
A useless piece of unregretted pomp,
And into midnight's soft warm bosom sink,
And rest, and be forgotten——

Du Muy. Oh, my lord,
And is this life, and we who love you, such
That nought can win you back to love again?
Believe me, sir, no fiery flashing toy,
An evening's wonder and a nine days' tale,
You shine before us—*you*, the cynosure
And pole star of our life. And you would leave us?
Dauphin [taking his hand]. Oh, pardon, brother
 of my dearest years,
And closest friend of this imprisoned heart!

'Tis not ingratitude to you, to her,
To any—but to live as I must live,
See all things rotting round me day by day,
And put no finger forth to stay the pest ;
Mark the great clouds that build them up in black
ness,

Piling themselves in purpler, denser gloom
Day after day o'er France—a silent throng
Not moved by wind, nor thunder, nor by rain,
Nor suffocating mist, but as they near me
All full of faces horrible as hell,
Black-wingèd shapes of carnage, beaked and clawed,
A thousand harpies spluttering filth and blood,
Long pent-up Vengeance, fanatic Revolt,
Blasphemous Sacrilege, ferocious Hate,
Blind, headlong, self-destructive Anarchy—
A day of darkness and of gloom indeed,
Cloud and thick darkness——

[*Pauses. Du Muy makes signs of deprecation.*

Hear me out, dear brother.

Perchance that malefactor on the cross,
The late-repentant, promised Paradise,
When that sixth hour brought darkness and eclipse—
Who knows, but as he hung half swooning there,
He hoped one moment that the thickening gloom
Were Death's dark hand that brought him liberty?
Yet still the darkness grew, and still he hung,
Hope yet deferred——Oh, so it is with me.
I hoped one moment that the gloom were death
To free me from this cross of weary life ;
But still I live, and still the darkness grows,
And barely can I see the glimmering Form
That turned its eyes, its voice, so tenderly

Even now on me the unworthy. Ah, dear friend,
The hours go by, and all things have an end.
She comes! But nought of this to her.

Enter DAUPHINESS.

M. J. 'Tis like old times to see you side by side.
How oft he asked for you, Du Muy, how often
Even in his wanderings he pronounced your name.
But say, what have you there?

Du Muy. A trifle, madam,
This day's memento. [*Unfolds an engraving.*
See where grateful France

Offers her tribute to the god of health,
Wise Æsculapius, for his Highness' life.
A female handiwork; the name you love not¹
See at the foot inscribed!

Dauphin. Great heavens! methinks
As well the Sultan might give thanks to Christ
As she to Æsculapius! Put it from you,
Lest even the sight of it should bring relapse.

M. J. God save us from such gratitude!

Du Muy. And yet,
Where Truth for very heartfulness is dumb,
Hypocrisy will sometimes find him words.
Full oft the altar's ministering priest
Prays with defiled lips and thoughts astray;
Those hands that lift the sacred Host, last night
Shuffled the cards, or shook the loaded dice;
Those lips sang ditties of false love. What then?
Obscurely kneeling in some pillared nook,
The faithful Christian from that mouth, those hands,
Gains grace and benediction. Shallow minds,

¹ This engraving was the work of Madame de Pompadour.

Cold hearts and worldly natures oftentimes
Find utterance when poor Faith and Love are mute.
Yet were it not for speechless Faith and Love,
The ready-tongued dissemblers scarce would find
A patient listener. Feigning lives by truth,
Shadow by substance, and the true in turn
Speaks through the false and betters it, and shames
Its hollow emptiness.

Dauphin. Be it so, Du Muy,
For when thou speak'st of faithful love and true,
Thou speak'st of thine own heart, the truest heart
That ever friendship warmed to constancy.

M. J. Yet not more true, Du Muy, than his who
dwells

Upon your name when absent, like the strain
Of music sweet, unwillingly forgot,
Recalled to memory with delight !

Du Muy. Your Highness,
I read a warning in your nurse's eye
That bids me kind good night.

Dauphin. Good night, Pu Muy.
[*Du Muy offers to kiss his hand. Dauphin
embraces him.*]

Nay, nay, thy cheek, old comrade, close to mine !
[*Aside.*] I have oped my heart to you ; but silence,
silence.

Du Muy. Good night, sweet lady, Dauphiness or
nurse,
Mother—one title more be yours one day.

Dauphin. Nay, Heaven forbid ! Good night !
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*The Apartments of Madame de Pompadour.*

LADY-IN-WAITING and WILHELM STRAUSS.

Lady lights wax candles and stirs fire.

Wilhelm. Your lady's late this afternoon, madam.

Lady-in-waiting. Not later than she very often is [yawning]. If she comes home in a good temper I don't care; but sometimes lately she's flown at me like a tigress. I know then who's really at the bottom of it.

Wilhelm. May one ask who it is, madam?

[*Lady-in-waiting puts her finger on her lips, and makes a coquettish gesture at him.*]

Wilhelm. What an exquisite statue of Silence you would make, madam! Had I such a model I should be the envy of all my fellow-workers.

L.W. It would be a good thing if we were *all* statues, and then we should never lose our tempers. How can I help it if she is not so young as she was? One would think sometimes the wrinkles were all of my putting in, whereas I am sure I do my best to paint them out.

Wilhelm. And an admirable artist you are, madam! What a power she has still! She turns the fortunes of Europe round that wilful little finger of hers. Here's proof enough of it in my basket.

L.W. Show me, show me, there's a good fellow, before she comes. Ah! what rare china, what divine colouring! Dresden itself could not better that. Ah! what grace, what delicacy! [*Holds up a china cup.*] Worthy of a queen truly.

Wilhelm. Worthy of an empress, I hope, for 'tis destined for one.

L. W. What, *the* Empress Queen? Maria Theresa? Our last new friend?

Wilhelm. I hope if it is as new it will not be as brittle as some intimacies. Even crockery lasts longer than the friendships it betokens.

L. W. Hush, hush, the Empress is everything now. We have forgotten that we ever quarrelled with her. We embrace by deputy, we send kisses in the air. She writes us such truly sisterly letters. I promise you we were pleased at that. It put us into a perfectly beatific temper. Do you remember what used to hang there? [*pointing to a place on the wall*].

Wilhelm. No, madam, not exactly—some one on horseback by chance?

L. W. That starveling Roman-nosed King of Prussia. He's upstairs now in the gallery with his face to the wall; and our dear Abbé Bernis sent us that saint—Saint—the one who protects Paris—Saint Geneviève—with his benediction for our services to the Catholic faith. We go to church and to confession. In fact, sir, what would you have?

Wilhelm. Nothing, for my part, but the money, madam, for my little commission, and a word or two, if I might be so bold, with the Marchioness in private.

L. W. Don't mention money! We pay people in honour and glory here. Talk of money! you might as well speak of the smallpox or——

Wilhelm. The earthquake, perhaps, at Lisbon, madam.

L. W. Oh, what a horror! It makes me shudder all over.

Wilhelm. To think of all those poor souls swallowed up alive! As you say, madam, it is too terrible.

L. W. Heavens! Never speak of it—it gives me the vapours! No one in good society mentions such things. And she, of all people, can't endure them. There she is! I hear her gown rustling. You had better retire to the antechamber till I call for you.

Enter Madame DE POMPADOUR. Flings down her muff and her gloves angrily and seats herself. Lady-in-waiting assists in taking off her mantle.

Madame de P. You hurt me, you awkward girl! Fi! what an icicle you are! Do warm your hands before you touch me. What a miserable fire you keep! Some chocolate, quick! You are never ready with anything. [*Opens a letter and reads it.*] So! more bad news from abroad—two of our ships, the 'Lys' and the 'Alcide,' taken by that English cub, Admiral Gascoigne, Bo-caigne, Boscawen. This must not go on. This grows very serious indeed. [*Takes her chocolate and sips it.*] I wonder our officers are not ashamed of themselves not to know their own business better. Put that letter, child, under my muff. Ah, this is better—Count Kaunitz! Those Austrians know how to write. [*Smiles as she reads.*] 'Charmante Marquise, nous espérons plus de vos beaux yeux que nous ne craignons de toutes les forces de la Prusse.' A little more sugar, girl. There, you may take it. Bring me my slippers and my mirror. [*Takes the mirror and looks at herself.*] Child, do you see anything in my look to-day different from usual?

L. W. No, indeed, madam, except that madam grows, if possible, lovelier every day.

Madame de P. Do I look indignant?

L. W. I thought at her first entry, from the sur-

passing brilliancy of her eyes and of her cheek, madam had possibly been annoyed by something.

Madame de P. Would anyone believe it, Justine? I was at a *brelan* table with that wicked little countess, that little Claire! Her impertinence to me was something unutterable. You should have seen the face she put on when she held up a card and said, 'Madam, I hold the King.' You never saw such malice in any pair of mortal eyes—such arrogance.

L. W. The most insolent face I ever saw, madam.

Madame de P. What did she mean by that, do you think?

L. W. Oh, nothing, madam, I imagine, except that she held the king of trumps in her hand.

Madame de P. I know better than that.

L. W. Has his Majesty taken any particular notice of her? Ugly little thing I always think her, madam—with *such* a nose, too!

Madame de P. Hideous, but as sly as a cat. Before my face of course not, but how am I to know what goes on behind my back?

L. W. If he does, it must be only as some people mortify themselves to enjoy a feast more heartily by-and-by. He looks at her that he may have keener pleasure in afterwards gazing elsewhere.

Madame de P. Ah, Justine, I am too shrewd to be flattered thus.

L. W. Indeed, madam, knowing how shrewd you are, I should never venture to flatter you. But no one who looked at you and then at her could doubt who would come off victorious in such a contest. She has no more chance against you than the Prussians will have against our brave veterans.

Madame de P. Veterans!—why veterans?

L.W. Oh, I did not say veterans, madam, did I? I said legions, I think. There is a man outside from Sèvres who is waiting till you are at leisure to see him.

Madame de P. Ah! my present for the Empress. Bring him in.

Enter WILHELM, who makes a profound reverence.

Wilhelm. I am proud of the honour her ladyship has accorded me.

Madame de P. Unpack your basket, sir! I am pressed for time.

Wilhelm. May I recall to your remembrance that we were commissioned to execute in china the portraits of the great beauties of this and the preceding reign?

[*Hands one up.*

L.W. Ah! what loveliness! Mademoiselle de Fontanges. She is truly divine, is she not, madam?

Wilhelm. The Duchess de Longueville. Madame de Grignan.

Madame de P. That is a good blue you have there.

Wilhelm. Yes, madam; we flatter ourselves that we have succeeded tolerably in that one. Mademoiselle de la Vallière.

Madame de P. That will do. You may leave them there for the present; and leave me too, I am weary. The King shall see your work. I know you value his patronage.

Wilhelm. And yours too, madam.

Madame de P. Well, I am satisfied on the whole; you shall hear from me again. The door, Justine.

Wilhelm. Pardon me, madam, but your condescension gives me courage. You are all-powerful with his Majesty.

Madame de P. What is that to you?

Wilhelm. Only, madam, that I cannot believe your heart could steel itself against the sorrows of an old man, Paul de la Vigne, now in the Bastille for his religion. Yes, madam, he is dying there of disease and neglect, while we——

Madame de P. A heretic? I know him. You would not have such men allowed to walk abroad and corrupt the faith of others? Besides, I hear he is obstinate, and will not give up the names of those who are implicated in the same charges.

Wilhelm. You would not surely, madam, have him betray his friends?

Madame de P. The friendship of the wicked is no friendship.

Wilhelm. You are right there, madam. But——
[*Madame de P. makes an angry movement.*] You will not hear me, then? His blood will be upon your head!

Madame de P. Insolent! Justine, call the lackeys, and bid them turn him out! What, sir, insult me in my own apartment?

Wilhelm. An hour will come, madam, when you will bitterly rue that you have hardened your heart against me.

Madame de P. An hour will come when *you* will bitterly rue your audacious freedom. Depart, I tell you, this instant! [*Lackeys push Wilhelm out.*]

L.W. I am astounded, madam, at the fellow's impertinence.

Madame de P. I have left off being astounded at anything. People seem to have neither conscience, faith, nor loyalty left.

L.W. What is the world coming to? It is inconceivable.

Madame de P. Leave me alone, Justine. I am disgusted and worn out. Leave me, I say.

[Exit Lady-in waiting.]

Oh, weary, weary, weary of the world,
And sick at heart for every rustling straw
That haply bodes a tempest. '*I hold the King!*'
Why should those ominous words still tick-a-tack
Swing like the clicking pendulum of time
For ever in mine ears? '*I hold the King!*'
Well, let her hold him, but the power is mine;
He plays with her, in earnest comes to me.
Look at me, glass, and tell me I am not old!
Was this the face that won him first? Those eyes
Are bright as ever, but that tell-tale line
The paint scarce hides. . . . O horror! threads of grey
Peer through the powdery whiteness—'tis not that,
'Tis something more, and something less! a change
As of the light from morn to afternoon,
A weight, a dullness, and a weariness.
Oh, whisper not I am not what I was,
Oh, breathe not, even in thought, what I must be!

[Takes up portrait of La Vallière.]

And you, soft creature, gentle penitent,
Poor tender woman, who laid down your arms
At the first brunt of battle, look upon me
And tell me—*In the cloister there is peace,
And heavenly mercy heals the aching heart
Tortured by earthly love.* 'Twas well for you!
I cannot follow you. Plead not with me thus!
I want the world; the world has need of me.
Call me a sinner! Fling it in my teeth;
That! when the fates of Europe in the scale
Want but my counterpoise for loss or gain.
France totters if I fall; the proudest queen,

Austere as Virtue's self, boasts me her sister ;
I trample Heresy 'neath my slippered feet ;
What priest, what bishop, but would proudly claim
My friendship for himself? The Queen !—Heaven
help her !—

A poor weak dreamer. Let her paint and sew,
And say her prayers, and fret her eyes to dimness.
The King !—the fan I flutter in my hand
Scarce more my helpless ornamental tool.
For what was all my beauty given to me?
Just to delight one mean Parisian home—
A bourgeois husband's darling in the hours
He spares from business—just to grace the board
Of private, mercantile, inglorious life?
A thousand women breathe for this ; I only,
Like some great diamond fittest for a crown,
Disdain all meaner wearers !

Enter LADY-IN-WAITING.

Lady-in-waiting. Madam, the country girl you named has brought you a letter from the curate of St. Jacques.

[*Enter girl, curtseying. Madame de P. pushes the china aside, and looks up.*

Madame de P. And so, Jeannette, 'tis thou?

L. W. The letter, girl !

Think'st thou her ladyship can wait all night?

[*Jeannette produces letter, which Madame de P. reads.*

'Madam, I have the honour to present to you the bearer, Jeannette Legros, whom I commend as a fit subject for charity. In bestowing a dower on her you will, madam, be assisting a girl of excellent character,

and a young workman of whom I have every reason to think highly.' Well, Jeannette, is this true?

Jeannette. An't please you, madam.

Madame de P. You love this—Jean—this——

Jeannette. Antoine, please my lady.

Madame de P. And never loved but him?

Jeannette. So please you, never.

Who could love others, if they once loved him?

Madame de P. And you'll be married soon?

Jeannette. At the All Saints feast,
After next harvest, if my lady please.

Madame de P. That's well. [*To Lady-in-waiting.*

Go, fetch the paper from my desk.

See, there's the dower I promised, fifty louis,
Reward of virtue and of maiden life
Led blameless. 'Tis a wicked world, my girl,
And you—you have done well, and well deserve—
And may you long deserve—this gift from me.
As maiden pure to-day, as faithful wife
In days to come, hold virtue fast; be sure
'Tis womanhood's chief jewel, all besides
Is disappointment, rottenness, and dust.
Nay, girl, your tears will blot the paper. Stay,
Keep tears for better cause; be sure you'll have it.

Jeannette. Oh, no, I never can be sad again,
Thanks to the Holy Virgin and to you!
How good, how happy, lady, must you be;
How like an angel bringing blessings down
In those white hands as beautiful as flowers
From Heaven to men! Oh, how I'll pray for you!
And Antoine, and our children by-and-by,
When God shall send them, all shall learn your name
Next to the Blessed Mother and St. Anne;
You might be one of them, a dazzling saint

Above the altar where we kneel at mass
Beside the tapers' flame ! But *they* are silent ;
'Tis wonderful to me to hear you speak,
As if, almost, Our Lady's self had bent
Her stately head, and oped her lips to bless me !

[*Kneels and kisses her hand.*]

Madame de P. Yes, pray for me, my girl.

Jeannette. Ay, I would pray,
But know not what to ask, for you have all things ;
So rich yourself, so lovely, and so good,
What *can* I ask for you ?

Madame de P. [*turning away*]. I know not, girl.

L. W. Nay, you must stay no longer, for my lady
Is pressed for time.

Petitioners come crowding round the door,
And we are late already.

Madame de P. [*going*]. Bid her good even.

[*Exit Madame de P.*]

Jeannette [*curtseying*]. Good even—Oh, she is
gone ! I could not thank her,
The tears were in her eyes, and all for me.
To think a lady of her sort should weep
For humble ones as we are !

L. W.

Quick, this way.

[*Exit girl.*]

Enter the Abbé DESMOULINS.

Abbé D. Peace to this house and all that dwell
therein.
Where is the lady ?

L. W. . . . I will fetch her straight.

Enter Madame DE POMPADOUR.

Abbé D. Her eyes are tearful, and her ruffled brow
Bodes us no good.

Madame de P. [to *L. W.*]. You, leave the room awhile.
[*Exit Lady-in-waiting.*]

Be seated, sir.

Abbé D. Your good works, dearest lady,
Are open and precede you. I but now
Met one, all tears of gratitude and joy,
Who rather sobbed than spoke your generous name,
Dowered by your bounty, but your kindness turned
The gold to dross, a thousand times more rich,
More precious than the gift.

Madame de P. Would I were like her !

Abbé D. Impossible ! None, madam, but your-
self

Could e'er have breathed the wish, for none but you
Are ignorant of all Heaven gave to man
The day He formed you ; all men save yourself
Know what He gave to France the day He set you,
An Esther fair by Ahasuerus' throne,
To plead His people's cause.

Madame de P. Then, 'tis not sin
To be—as I am now ?

Abbé D. Did Esther sin,
Sitting where Vashti late had sat, enthroned
In high all-conquering beauty, as a queen ?
Was *that* a sin, which saved the saints of God,
His chosen faithful, in that night of doom,
Compared with which Egyptian cruelties
Were merciful and kind ? Was that a sin
Which turned the royal heart of Persia's king
To the true, only faith ? Even thus, fair lady,
The Church, that better Israel, finds in you
Her bulwark.

Madame de P. But the means ?

Abbé D. The end in view

Makes righteous or unrighteous act : to steal
Is counted sinful, but to steal for alms
Surpasses honesty; so, to slay is sinful—
To slay the enemies of Heaven is just ;
And you, true daughter of our Mother Church,
What is your so-called sin—forgive the word—
Your life misconstrued, your true friendship branded
By tongues of ignorance with harsher names,¹
But sacrifice of self for pious end,
To serve the faith you hold? This very day
My very errand here will prove my truth :
This letter tells of certain heretics,
Imprisoned Hugonots, of late set free,
Who must be silenced. They have friends at Court,
And powerful ones.

Madame de P. I know—speak lower—hush !
Give me the letter, 'twill be safe with me.
The times and places must be chosen, the mood
Of some one watched ; the thing I dare to-night
To-morrow may be madness, or perchance
To-day is unpropitious, and next morn
I may say anything as the whim takes me,
And still be perfect in his eyes. O father !
'Tis no light burden you would put on me ;
But for the Church—the Church—— [*Sighs.*

Abbé D. The Church is served
In thousand different ways by differing men ;
Hers are the prayers of holy cloistered maids,
Hermits austere, and childhood's innocence ;
For her the soldier fights, the scholar kindles
His midnight lamp ; for her the courtier smiles,
Mid pomps that sicken, patient at his post ;
For her on beauty's neck the glittering stones

¹ See note at end of scene.

Tremble like dewdrops. Evil turns to good
Through her transforming alchemy; the world,
The devil, and the flesh—her conquered slaves—
Yoked in her car of triumph, bear her onward
Through ages after ages as they roll.

Madame de P. He could not live without me!

None but I

Tell him the truth, which princes may not hear
Save from the tongue of one who more than life
Loves truth and loyalty. Believe me, father,
For this, and this alone, I linger here,
The butt of slander and embittered hate.
Oh, think not I am deaf and blind and dull,
Because I laugh and smile! My love of him—
My love of France—have steeled me to endure
The gibes and flouts of crowds beside my coach,
The epigrams of wit, the courteous hate
Of civil, cold, contemptuous womanhood;
The Dauphin's tell-tale face—let him speak out,
And call me what he thinks me. [*Sobs.*] But I bear it;
For true devotion's sake and love of France
I suffer thus!

Abbé D. Such suffering is the price
You offer for the Church's good; cold looks,
Secret malevolence and prudish sneers,
That misinterpret what they envy—these,
Like disregarded curs at strangers' heels,
Bark in the train of lofty lives.

Madame de P. Your words
Have fortified my soul. Farewell, good father!
I'll not forget.

Abbé D. Madam, farewell!

[*Exeunt.*]

NOTE.—About 1755-6, at the time this scene is supposed to take place, Madame de Pompadour had made a compromise with the

Church which admitted her to the Sacrament on the professed supposition that she was henceforward to occupy the position only of friendly adviser to the King. She became *dévôté*, and even went so far as to portion deserving brides. There is no absolute historical foundation for this scene, which if it exaggerates, as must be confessed, the complaisance of the clergy on this special occasion, is at least no unfair illustration of the way in which the maxim, 'The end justifies the means,' has often been applied, as e.g. in the influences brought to bear on our own Charles II.

SCENE IV.—*The court before the Palace at Versailles.*

Sentinel on guard and Chairman.

Chairman. Cold, Pierre, to-night, very cold. [*Blows his fingers.*] A downright wolfish night.

Pierre. Regular Christmas weather. His Majesty will have a chilly drive to Trianon to-night.

Chairman. Why should he go, then? I suppose he only goes because he has a mind to it. For my part I should be content to stay where I was, and save some honest fellows, and some poor horses, too, from taking cold. Phew! I wish he had my chilblains.

Pierre. Stupid! dost thou not know? To-morrow is Twelfth Day, and there are to be grand doings at Trianon.

Chairman. Marry, so it is! One day's pretty much like another to me. The almanack's only for gentle-folk and fellows as can read.

Pierre. I had no chance of forgetting the day. My little girl has been learning a carol about it. She's somewhere about here, waiting for me. Look, under the archway. Here, Françoise, I want thee. None here but friends.

Enter FRANÇOISE.

Come, child, and sing us that carol about the three kings.

Françoise. I can't, father.

Pierre. *Can't!* When thou'st been dinning it into my ears, morning, noon, and night, for the last week! Was there ever such a little coward?

Chairman. Thou'rt not afraid of old Jacques, surely? Come, come.

Françoise [*sings*].

There were three kings that came from far,
Wise Gaspard, Melchior, Balthazar,
All guided by the heavenly star
To Bethlehem.

They left the east and sought the west,
They wandered on and took no rest,
Such hope, such courage in their breast,
To Bethlehem.

And one brought myrrh and one brought gold,
And one brought frankincense untold;
At last the young Child they behold
In Bethlehem,

On mother's knee a thronèd King!
Their treasures at His feet they fling:
To-day our souls with them must sing
In Bethlehem.

[*During the singing of this song Damiens crosses the stage.*]

That's all, father.

Pierre. And a pretty little carol, too, my child.

Chairman. And a pretty little singer, Pierre. Come, give old Jacques a kiss with that clever little mouth of thine. [*Tries to kiss her.*]

Pierre. Jacques, dost thou see that fellow skulking round the corner?

Chairman. Where? Nonsense, there is nobody. Silly child, what dost thou mean by bouncing up against me so?

Françoise. There is some one, father, a horrid-looking man! He passed me in the street.

Chairman. Quick, quick, child, out of the way. There are the wheels. Take care, or the big horses will run over thee.

[The royal carriage drives up. Pierre catches up Françoise in his arms. The palace doors are opened. Enter KING, DAUPHIN and courtiers, all dressed in riding coats. All stand back to allow the King to enter the carriage.]

King. A cold evening, gentlemen, and darker than I thought. A light here, some one! My fur mantle, Charles.

Servant. It is in the carriage, your Majesty.

[As the King is entering the carriage, DAMIENS rushes forward and plunges a knife into him.]

King. The villain! He has killed me.

Damiens. Let the Dauphin take care of himself. He is a dead man if he leaves the house to-day.

[Confused cries of 'Let them fetch a physician! Where is the surgeon? The King, the King! Murder! Carry him indoors! Fetch some linen! Catch the villain! Where is he? More light! See, there he is!']
The Dauphin assists to carry in the King. As they pass, the King points to Damiens.

King. It is he who did it! Why does he stand

there so carelessly with his hat on? Oh, I am a dead man. Oh, how it bleeds! It must be my heart. I am dying, I know I am. My son, when I am gone, you will make a better king than I have done.

Dauphin. I hope that day will be a long way off yet, my dear father. *[Exeunt King and Dauphin.]*

[A crowd surround Damiens, exclaiming, 'Assassin! Parricide! Bigot! Madman! To the Bastille with him! Hang him! Torture him! Tear him to pieces!']

Damiens. I did it all for the sake of religion. It is because of the Bull Unigenitus and the Jesuits, and the Archbishop refusing the sacraments to the people. I have done it. I am not ashamed to own it. Let the Dauphin beware lest his turn come next. Do with me what you will.

[Exit crowd, bearing Damiens along with them, leaving the stage empty. A soft chime of distant bells is heard. Re-enter Dauphin alone.]

Dauphin. I see I am too late for words of mercy. The crowd is scattered and the tumult stilled. O night! O quiet! O thou darksome sky! Thick as the fog which hovers round a king, Distorting this and magnifying that, Hiding perhaps the thing 'twere best he knew, And masking Truth in Error—hast thou come To-night to warn me of my future doom, A groping puzzled life of doubt and pain? King!—I a king! Good heavens, in love avert This crowning trouble from me! Reign o'er France!

How in this tangled wilderness of sin,
Oppression, falsehood, keep th' invisible clue

Which only leads along the narrow way ?
Oh, darkness o'er my head and in my heart,
Oh, wandering footsteps in a path unknown,
Whither, ah, whither do ye lead me now,
And what the end of this ?

[*Child's voice is heard singing.*

They left the east and sought the west,
They wandered on and took no rest,
Such hope, such courage in their breast,
To Bethlehem.

Dauphin. Ah! 'tis the evening of Epiphany.
O happy kings, beneath that guiding star !
Not vain your wanderings, nor misplaced your gifts
Flung at the Infant's feet that blessed day.
Open, ye heavens, that lower so thick above me,
And let me see one gleam before I die ! [Looks up.
Even as I speak a streak of palest blue,
More grey than blue, comes stealing through th'
obscure,
The swaying clouds asunder part, and see !
One trembling star, a long way off in heaven ;
So small, so dim, so trembling is my hope,
Yet even for that, O God of heaven ! I thank Thee.

[*Child's voice sings.*

On mother's knee a thronèd King !
Their treasures at His feet they fling :
To-day our souls with them must sing
In Bethlehem.

[*Exit Dauphin.*

SCENE V.—*The King's Antechamber at Versailles.*

The Abbé DESMOULINS and M. LANDSMATH.

Landsmath. Sir, I presume your reverence is fresh from his Majesty's bedside. May I ask how he is to-day?

Abbé D. In a perfect frame of mind, chevalier. Familiar as my office has made me with sick-beds, I never was so truly edified as in this case. I left him—excuse me for the weakness—with tears in my eyes.

[*Takes out his handkerchief.*]

Landsmath. Oh, what a privilege!

Abbé D. You are right, sir. It is indeed a privilege to hear the accents of such a soul, one so full of devout aspirations.

Landsmath. It was not about his soul, monsieur, but his body, that I wished to inquire. Souls are not in my department.

Abbé D. Nor, I fear, sir, are bodies in mine.

Landsmath. But, at any rate, you can tell me how he looked?

Abbé D. Like a saint, sir! [*Throws up his hands.*]

Landsmath. I meant did he look ill or well in the face? Was his voice strong?

Abbé D. Broken with sobs of contrition. Ah, the touching spectacle! I shall never forget it.

Landsmath [*impatently*]. Has he seen her Majesty?

Abbé D. She has been at his bedside all night, a pattern of conjugal devotion. Monica herself—

Landsmath. That looks bad. Then I presume no other lady has been summoned?

Abbé D. Only his daughters.

[*Stiffly.*]

Landsmath. That looks worse. How about M. le Dauphin? I hear his praises on all sides.

Abbé D. He is constantly with his Majesty.

Landsmath. That looks almost hopeless.

Abbé D. Heaven forbid!

Landsmath. Amen with all my heart! The Dauphin and I are no very great friends. They say the Parliament already feels it has a stronger and firmer hand over it than it has been used to. Ah, monsieur, this Dauphin of ours is a fine fellow, but he has got a lot of moping long-faced prigs about him who will be the ruin of him if he does not take care. He has never been himself since that foolish shooting business when his gun went off by chance and killed poor Chambors. A sad affair, but a thing that might have happened to any gentleman! I have had such misfortunes myself, but I am thankful to say, what with pretty decent health and a good digestion, I never let them get the better of me. But, as I was saying, he is a fine fellow. Not so handsome as his father, I grant. Few of us can come up to the Bien-aimé, but he knows how to walk and speak as well as any Bourbon of them all. He has dined in public these two nights. Did you go, monsieur?

Abbé D. [*stiffly*]. No, sir, I was too much occupied in my sad duties here.

Landsmath. Oh, of course, of course. But you missed a fine sight. It put me in mind of old times, just the right word for everybody, such affability, such discrimination! The people of Bretagne—such a gracious message as he sent them—are all ready, I hear, to fall down and worship him.

Abbé D. Truly we may say a soft answer turneth away wrath.

Landsmath [*aside*]. Yes, and we may equally well say an evasive answer produces it.

Enter LACQUEY.

Lacquey. The King will see you, sir.

[*Exit Abbé Desmoulins.*

[*Scene opens and discovers King in bed. Ladies weeping round. Landsmath goes to the bedside.*

King. Ah, *Landsmath*, my old friend! I am glad to see you once more.

Landsmath. I beg your pardon, sire, but I never could stand tears.¹ If those ladies with wet pocket-handkerchiefs would kindly withdraw, I should have a word to say to your Majesty alone.

King. You can leave us for a few minutes, mesdames. [*Exeunt ladies.*] And now, *Landsmath*——

Landsmath. And now, sire! How does your Majesty? Better, I hope? [*Opens the curtain.*] Your Majesty looks uncommonly well in the face.

King. Ah, *Landsmath*! Don't trust to looks.

Landsmath. *Fronti nulla fides*, eh, sire?

King. I am ill, I tell you, very ill. You and I will never go out hunting again.

Landsmath. Pardon me, sire. There is a remedy for everything but death. May I see your Majesty's august wound? Ah! that will do. We must not meddle too rashly with the dressings.

[*King opens nightgown and exposes it.*

King. There! did you ever see such a place?

Landsmath. Is that the only one?

King. Why, you fool, what would you have?

¹ This interview is an almost literal reproduction of the reality.

Landsmath [*takes off his coat and partly opens his shirt*]. There, your Majesty. That's what I call a wound. A good handsome sword-cut. See what a scar it is. I've got four or five others like it, if your Majesty would care to see them.

King. Then you really don't think it is serious?

Landsmath. Serious! Hum. Would your Majesty draw a long breath? [*King breathes deeply.*] Famous! Now then, sire, cough, cough hard—as hard as you can. [*King coughs. Landsmath hits him on the back.*] As sound as a bell. Well, I hope I may never see anybody worse, sire, that's all.

King. But the poison, *Landsmath*, you forget. Suppose the knife were poisoned?

Landsmath. Well, suppose it were! Why, how many waistcoats had your Majesty on? Three at least, and a thick comforter over that, and a wadded greatcoat. Enough to wipe off all the poison that *Brinvilliers* herself ever brewed. Come, your Majesty, enough of this! I'll answer for your life. Put this old woman's rubbish out of your head, get up and be dressed, and in two or three days we'll worry a stag. I see his Royal Highness is coming, so I'll wish your Majesty good morning.

King. And you really think it is nothing?

Landsmath. A fleabite.

King. And I need not be anxious?

[*Landsmath snaps his fingers, laughing, and retires with a bow to the King, and a more serious one to the Dauphin.*]

Enter DAUPHIN as exit Landsmath.

Dauphin. I am glad to see your Majesty looking more cheerful.

King. Landsmath, there, says it is nothing, and, indeed, I don't think I feel so bad as I did.

Dauphin. Thank Heaven for it !

King [*sharply*]. What have you got there ?

Dauphin. A letter, sire, from that wretched assassin.

King. Let me see. *That* is not poisoned, I suppose ?

Dauphin. Impossible, sire. The officials supplied the paper and pen. See, here is the counter signature.

King [*reads*]. 'Sire, I am very sorry to have had the misfortune to attack you ; but if you do not take the part of your people, in a few years you and the Dauphin and some others will surely perish.' Heaven and earth ! With what assurance the fellow writes !

Dauphin. He must be insane.

King. 'The Archbishop of Paris is the cause of all this trouble, by his refusal of the sacraments. After the cruel crime I have just committed against your sacred person, the sincere confession I now take the liberty of making, gives me leave to indulge a hope of mercy from your Majesty's generous benevolence. (Signed) DAMIENS.' Did anyone ever hear the like ? Run a knife into your heart, and then ask a favour from you ? Did one ever hear the like ?

Dauphin. A strange, wrongheaded, miserable wretch. God grant him repentance !

King. This cannot be his own writing. After the torture it is impossible that his hand should be as firm as this. I trust, in my illness, there has been no relaxation of discipline.

Dauphin. Indeed no, sire. Even the ladies of the Court are full of it. It is the last great excitement of

Paris. They put hot irons to his feet, and I hear that the tendo Achillis is broken. His sufferings——

King. Ah! but just think what he has made *me* suffer. That pillow a little more this way. Thank you. I am so sick of being in bed.

Dauphin. But if he is mad after all?

King. Anyone can go mad if they choose. Anyone must be mad who kills a king. Think of it! To lift a hand against the Lord's anointed! Sacrilege!

Dauphin. But is it not possible that extenuating circumstances——?

King. What circumstances could there be? Upon my life, my son, I believe you wish the blow had taken effect. Be gentle to this one, pet him and pity him, and possibly, next time, a bolder hand may accomplish all you desire.

Dauphin. Father, I will not try to understand such an imputation. I thought you had known me better.

King. Yes, I did think I knew you better, I *did* think—— But I must not heat myself. You may as well leave me and take your *protégé's* letter with you. If I do get well, as Landsmath says, I'll show you, and him too, what I think of it. People will soon think no more of shedding the blood of a king than of a rabbit if this goes on. Let him suffer as he deserves. He has made his bed, and he must lie on it, even if it be an iron one—ha! ha!

Enter LACQUEY.

Lacquey. Your Royal Highness is expected at the Council.

Dauphin. Have I your leave, sire, to retire?

King. As you please. [*To Lacquey.*] Here, fellow, give me my writing things, and look on the table for

my crystal seal-ring, the one with the Cupid and a torch, and light the taper by me.

[The Dauphin bows to his father, who takes no notice of him. Dauphin advances to front of stage; the door closes behind him.]

Dauphin. This for a madman, for a miscreant wretch

Goaded to frenzy by these frenzied times!
Torture, the rack and wheel, and pangs so rare,
So exquisite, that he who reads hereafter
Shall shudder at the thought, and turn the page
That tells th' inglorious history of our day
In pale and sickening horror. I stand here,
Too well in body and too sound in mind,
While all the friendly world conspires to save
My burdensome, unprofitable life.
Oh, could I change with him! Methinks 'twere easy;
And welcome, agony of joint and nerve,
Sharp spasms, hot quivering flushes, deadening sleeps
Of faintness, waking soon to fiercer pains,
So could I shift the torture from my soul,
Bloodguiltiness in act,¹ and oh, far more,
The blood of ruined souls that cries to Heaven
In silence, far more dread than Abel's voice,
And imprecates revenge on all our race.
God, in Thy mercy pity us and them,
Nor deal with us as we with fellow-men! *[Exit.]*

¹ Alluding to the accidental death of his servant, Chambors, which affected him so deeply that he refused ever to touch a gun again. On being told that it was 'contrary to usage' for one of his rank to stand godfather to Chambors' orphan child, he replied, 'Il n'est pas non plus d'usage qu'un Dauphin tue un homme.'

ACT IV.

1757.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Dauphin's House.*DAUPHINESS (MARIA JOSEPH) *at a window.*

M. J. O dark November day, wet wind-swept leaves,
Rank scent of rottenness and swift decay,
That hangs in each moist particle of dew,
Infects each breath! O weeping, songless woods,
Blurred shapes of things like trees, low hovering mists,
Sky without sun, like hearts without a hope ;
How all things darken round us !

[*Opens window and looks out.*

Evening falls.

The Countess Ida should ere this be here.
Oh, how I crave her presence, how I dread !
Sometimes I dream that all things even now
Are as of old at Dresden, that report
Lied when it said my fair sweet Saxon home
Had fallen a prey to foemen. I could dream
My father still a master in his halls,
My mother resting in her wonted bower,
Life smoothly flowing, faces in the street,
At table, all unchanged. I could forget
Proud Frederick's arrogance—forget, O heavens !
Defeat, humiliation, exile, pain,
That hoary head uncovered to the blast,
The sting of fierce injustice, and the dart

Of cold and sneering insolence——'Tis she !

[*Sound of carriage driving up.*]

Light flashes in the courtyard ; voices sound ;

Come Ida, come. O welcome !

Enter Countess IDA and ATTENDANT.

Countess Ida. Here I am at last, splashed with mud from head to foot, aching in every bone. [*To servant.*] There, take off my travelling cloak, it is wringing wet. Ah, your Royal Highness, I mind nothing now I see you again. But oh, you have been ill, your face has grown so thin—so thin, and your poor hand [*kisses it*], one can almost see through it.

M. J. We all grow older, Ida, and things have not been very cheerful of late. But I hope they are mending now.

Countess Ida [*holds up her hands*]. Mending !

M. J. Yes, Fortune seems to be turning her back on the King of Prussia in good earnest this time. The English have left him to shift for himself. The Hanover rats have swum away from the sinking ship. By this time, too, I hope the Prince de Soubise has taught him a lesson.

Countess Ida. Prince de Soubise ! Soubise ! What, has your Royal Highness not heard ? Don't turn so pale—let me offer you some of my hartshorn. There, there, it will pass off.

M. J. Don't trifle with me, Ida, I entreat ! Tell me at once. The Prince de Soubise ? The King of Prussia ? Tell me at once.

Countess Ida. The King of Prussia has made short work of him and his army, at a place—somewhere near the Saal—they call it Rossbach, I think. Soubise is utterly ruined, and his army completely routed.

M. J. Good Heaven above us! What! Soubise, with fifty thousand men!

Countess Ida. Fifty thousand starved monkeys! Hardly a soldier, to call a soldier, among them.

M. J. It must be a mistake, Ida. We should surely have been the first to hear the news.

Countess Ida. It will be all over Paris in a few hours. At the inn where I stopped to change horses all the world was talking of it, and cursing the King and Madame de Pompadour. But what a place this France of yours is! The starving beggars along the roads, the skin-and-bone cattle, the pinched shivering children wherever one halts, are sickening to behold.

M. J. But are you sure, quite sure, that you did not misunderstand? It must have been Soubise who got the victory over the King of Prussia, Soubise with fifty thousand, the King of Prussia with not half so many. Think again, Ida. Are you *sure*?

Countess Ida. Don't I know the look of people's faces too well for that? I saw enough of it that terrible time at Dresden—that cowed, savage, dejected look. I tell your Royal Highness if you once had seen the King of Prussia you would wonder at nothing. He is a man of iron, and not of flesh and blood. Shall I ever forget his face that day he came into our Queen's room and forced her to give up the secret treaties? Call him a gentleman! He has no more respect for a woman than for a dog. He forced her actually to get off the chest on which she was seated, and insisted on searching it. He is a butcher—a barbarian.

M. J. My poor, poor mother! Tell me, Ida, truly, is she much changed? Is her hair grown white? Does she sleep well?

Countess Ida. We are all changed, I think. She looked as if she had cried till she could cry no more when I saw her last, just before they went to Poland.

M. J. And my father?

Countess Ida. I did not see his Majesty again. But I have a letter for you from him in my portmanteau. I will go and fetch it.

M. J. Give me your arm, then, *Ida*. We will go together, I cannot lose sight of you yet.

[They retire to the back of the stage.]

Enter KING, talking eagerly, followed by DAUPHIN.

King. I tell you it is useless to make such a piece of work. *Belle Isle* says, and he ought to know, that *Soubise* was not to blame. It was all the doing of that fool of a German, *Hildeburghausen*, with his runaway troops. *Soubise* is as good a fellow as ever breathed—a thorough gentleman. I tell you I will not hear a word against him! [*Dauphin makes a gesture of despair.*] It is no use your looking at me like that. I grant you it is an unlucky business, but no one can be always fortunate.

Dauphin. There is no misfortune in the world like that of being a born fool.

King. Sir, I do not understand you.

Dauphin. Except that of being born with one's wits, and not knowing or caring how to use them.

King. I do not know what you mean. I conclude you do not mean to insult me.

Dauphin. Far, far from it. But oh, father, you see what a state our army is in. Can you grudge me this one request—leave to go and place myself at its head?

King [*contemptuously*]. You!

Dauphin. They would rally round the son of their King. There is still some loyalty left.

King. Things are not bad enough for that. Soubise is a fine fellow ; he will pull himself together, you will see.

Dauphin. Pardon me, sire, but I think you hardly know how bitterly Paris is feeling this. The town is echoing with seditious speeches, lampoons against your royal person and those about you.

King. Do you suppose I do not know it ? It is bad enough to have the women crying and out of humour. I have no peace nor comfort of my life. And worst of all, another piece of news has come which is really intolerable. I do not know where to turn.

[*Pours himself out some chocolate, and helps himself to the sweetmeats on the table.*]

Dauphin. What, another defeat ? Impossible !

King. No, no ; I almost wish it were. But Leclercq tells me there is a disease broken out amongst the buckhounds. They have had to shoot three ; that beauty, Fantine, among them—poor bitch ! I cannot think what I shall do this winter. [*Dauphin walks aside and makes a gesture of despair to his wife, who retires with Countess Ida.*] Where do you get this chocolate from ? It is quite nauseous—an imposition. Faugh ! take it away.

Dauphin. Father, will you hear me or will you not ? Things are in an extremity.

King. Yes, yes ; that is just what I was saying.

Dauphin. Once more I entreat you to let me join the remains of our army. If your Majesty grants this request, I will never make you another.

King. I should be sorry to put that out of your power.

Dauphin. Father, let us be serious. Are you aware that we are almost as despised abroad as we are detested at home?

King. I ought to be by this time, considering how it has been dinned into my ears. But it seems to give you pleasure.

Dauphin. And you will not let me go and make one supreme effort to retrieve our lost fortunes—to bring back glory to the arms of France?

King. You mean well, I know, my son, but you are quite mistaken. Your place is here.

Dauphin. In old days a king's son was nothing if not a brave and gallant soldier.

King. We know better now. I tell you I do not choose you should go; let that suffice. Think how precious your life is.

Dauphin. So precious that, like a miser's gold, it is never to be turned to any account.

King. It is of no use trying to influence me; when I have said a thing, there is an end.

Dauphin. Yes, an end—an end indeed! You are breaking my heart. I shall never live to reign. I may as well die in battle as pine away here.

Enter LACQUEY.

Lacquey. Despatches, sire, have arrived from Germany.

King. Tell them to take them to the cabinet of the Marchioness. I will go there myself. Perhaps we shall hear things are not so bad after all. [*Exit King.*]

Dauphin [*following him*]. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps. It is not Fortune, but ourselves that make them what they are. Heaven grant me patience!

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

1759.

*The QUEEN, DAUPHINESS, and Duc DE BOURGOGNE,
her son, aged seven.*

M. J. Come, child, hast learnt thy task?

D. B. Which of them all?

There are so many, mother! Oh, *you'll* tell me!

[Seeing Queen.

I wanted you so much. I want the story
You once began, of Faithful John—you know.
Three iron bands he had about his heart,
And he was good and faithful to his prince,
Just like Du Muy.

M. J. What, *only* three, my child?

Queen. Enough for those old days, my daughter.

M. J. *[to boy].* Come,

I'll hear your lesson first. About St. Louis;
Stand here and tell me all you know of *him*.

D. B. Oh, he was a good man; he fought the in-
fidel,

As, mother, I should like to do some day.

M. J. Where did he fight?

D. B. *[rubbing his temples].* I'll tell you what! I
know!

I want to ride an elephant some day,
Like General Clive in the picture. Tell me, mother,
Whom would you like me now to go and fight with?

M. J. Wait till you're big—a big man like papa;
And meanwhile tell me where St. Louis fought.

D. B. Damascus, Damietta—'twas a D,
I'm sure—O mother, now I know, you'd want me

To fight the King of Prussia. Tell me, though ;
My father's brave, and yet he stays at home.
Is he afraid ?

M. J. No, no, my child.

Queen. Your father
Was ne'er afraid of anything in life,
Except of doing wrong. I would to Heaven
You may be brave and chivalrous as he,
And then your mother will be proud as I.

D. B. But won't they let him go ? I'd *make* them
let me.

I'd say a prince is born to have his will,
And if you cross it—well, the worse for you !
Just like a clod I crumble when I walk,
Or stone I kick aside.

Queen. Alas, poor boy !
How little knows he of our life !

M. J. My child,
Whate'er your father does or leaves alone,
Be sure he has good reasons. You, so young,
Must trust and wait. You'll know enough in time.

D. B. I wish I knew all that my father knows.

M. J. Then you should mind your lessons and your
book.

D. B. I will, I will ! My wish is all to learn,
And nothing to forget. St. Louis first.
Oh, happy days when no one learned to read !
But here's my father with his mournfullest face.

Enter DAUPHIN, looking very grave.

M. J. Something has vexed your father—go and
play,

I'll hear you after. [*D. B. remains listening.*

Queen. Ah, my son—ill news ?

Dauphin. Quebec has fallen. Montcalm is dead.

Queen. O Heaven !

How swift each new disgrace outstrips the last !

M. J. Oh, shameful news ! *[Bursts into tears.*

Dauphin. I cannot speak.

D. B. Why, now,

What's wrong, what vexes you ? I am quite well.

Queen. Ah, the old tale no prince e'er fails to learn ;
Each in his nursery thinks himself the pivot
Round which revolves the world of good and ill.

Dauphin [*aside*]. Ah, boy, thou bring'st my self-willed boyhood back,
That would have silenced each rough blowing wind¹
That tired mine ear. I thank thee, Teacher Life,
For these humiliations, pains severe,
God knows, yet needful to a soul like mine !

[Exit Duc de Bourgogne.

M. J. And did I hear it, that Montcalm was dead ?
How ?

Dauphin. As behoved a brave man, so he fell,
Before the town he guarded.

Queen. Heaven be with him !

Dauphin. The English paid his price—their General's dead.

M. J. What, Wolfe ? Then Heaven be with him,
too, since death
Makes every hero every hero's friend,
And all are countrymen within the grave.
Oh, I could smile amid our woes to think
There is a place beyond the gates of death
Where empires are no more, nor crowns, nor kings,
But that clear spark of virtue in the heart

¹ 'Faites donc taire ce vent-là,' a boyish exclamation of the Dauphin's.

Of each true man, true woman, gladly leaps
To meet its kindred fires, which circumstance
And petty tyrannies of mean self-love
Had buried once in ashes of distrust.

Dauphin. He died in the arms of glory. As he lay
In that last agony, tended by the hands
Whose love outran their skill, a thundering cry,
'They run, they run!' burst on him, as of hounds
Who all at once in some wide-stretching field
Burst clamorous on their prey. He raised his eyes
With 'Who are running?' on his lips. . . . The face
Had spoken without words! 'The French! the French!'
One told him, and again his head sank down,
A smile came o'er him. 'I die happy, then,'
He said, and passed into the silent land.

Queen. Oh, what a death to die!

M. J. So young, so glorious,
His life for victory given, his soul to God!

Dauphin. To die, ere youth had passed, a hero's
death,

Blaze up to heaven as on some funeral pyre!
Fragrant and joyous to the world below,
A wonder, flashing glory far and wide,
Such was his lot; while I, a useless log,
Lie smouldering here in darkness and in stench,
—My dreary death-in-life! 'Tis hard to bear,
O Heaven! 'tis hard to bear!

Queen. But think, my son,
How precious is your life to France!

Dauphin. I care not.
To stand with folded hands and see her perish,
Dying by inches, nor avert her doom,
Victim of one capricious will that plays
With empires, armies, policy and state,

As apes with firebrands! India lost to-day,
America to-morrow—for our honour
We lost *that* long ago! What more remains
That France *can* lose?

Queen. My son, her faith in Heaven.

M. J. That, some of us, methinks, have ne'er pos-
sessed.

Dauphin. To see the people's hearts all played away
For gaudy pasteboard shows! They once were ours,
Now——

[*Makes a gesture with his hand to express
emptiness. A pause.*]

Mother, you speak of faith in God. Oh, pray
For me, that I may keep my patience still.
The hour is come the council was to meet
In her apartments, and the Duc de Choiseul
Confronts me there.

M. J. No further words we need ;
Name him and——Husband, we will pray for you.

Dauphin. I have drunk the cup of wormwood to
the dregs ;
Yet bitterer still—who knows?—may lurk behind !
[*Exit Dauphin.*]

Queen. Oh, heavenly justice, is't for this we bear
Our sons, and bring them up with love and hope,
Take pride in them, and watch them, well content
To lose ourselves in them, as flowers fall off
And leave the fruit behind? Is it for this?
To see them blighted, stricken, crushed, despised,
In fullest, ripest manhood? Who would bear
A mother's pangs, her broken, wakeful nights,
Her tremulous, anxious being, all for this?
I saw him in his cradle and rejoiced ;
But hollow was my hope and brief my joy,

Since that dear life I gave him, I maintained,
He flings back to me now, a thankless gift.
—There's music truly in the name of 'queen,'
And sacredness in 'mother.' I who own
Both that and this can hear a funeral bell
Tolling behind them both. No more of this.

[*Looks out of window.*]

There goes the child, and dreams of fairy tales
And deeds of bold crusaders. I can tell him
Of hearts, from which his heart has drawn its life,
Bound round with adamant, not iron bands,
And if they break, 'tis once for all in death!
Come, come, my daughter [*embraces M. J.*], we must
bear our part

I' the pageants of the day.

M. J.

I'll follow you.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*Rheims. An open space in front of the
Convent of the Ursulines. Early morning.*

WILHELM STRAUSS *with a pony and market
panniers.*

Wilhelm. Patience, patience, Bruno! And yet I
would I had half thy equanimity. How quiet the
street is! the shops still shut, and the air so fresh, and
the sunrise beginning behind the roofs and pinnacles.
Ha! there goes the convent bell for prime. A door is
opening—there is a step. Yes, it was the inner gate!
Some one is coming. Quiet, quiet, Bruno! There
goes the door. It *is*, it *is* Elise!

Enter ELISE from convent, dressed as a peasant girl. She turns to the old woman who opens the door, and speaks in a country accent.

Elise. Three dozen eggs, did you say, to-morrow?
[*Curtseys.*]

Old Woman. Three dozen *fresh* eggs; the last you sent us were—— [*Makes a gesture of disgust.*]

Elise. I will see to them myself. There is my brother waiting for me.

O. W. You are not the one who generally comes with the butter.

[*Takes Wilhelm by the sleeve and looks hard at him.*]

Elise No, no. This poor fellow is deaf and dumb.

O. W. I'll make him understand.

[*Makes signs to indicate her disapproval of the last batch of butter, to which he replies in dumb show. Elise takes the opportunity to conceal a package in the pannier.*]

O. W. What are you hiding there? Girls like you are always light-fingered.

Elise. Only some old linen I am taking to mend.

O. W. I don't believe you. [*Sneezes violently.*]

Elise. Shall I show you, mother?

O. W. You are giving me my death keeping me out here in the cold. But mind, if I ever catch you again—— Oh, my old bones, my old bones!

[*Exit, pulling shawl over her head.*]

Elise. Yes, if you ever *do* catch me again, I'll give you leave to say what you like. Oh, Wilhelm, Wilhelm, I am shaking from head to foot!

Wilhelm [*altering the stirrup*]. Why did you say I was deaf and dumb?

Elise. You dear old goose, do you suppose there is no difference between your broken French and the *patois* of Champagne? If you had spoken, you would have betrayed us at once. Oh, dear, how frightened I have been! I was ill in bed, you know, all yesterday, and Toinette brought the dress in and hid it with the basket of eggs in a cell no one will go into after dark, because it is where the dead are laid out. When they were all safe in the oratory this morning, I stole in there and dressed myself. Toinette and I are a little alike, and old Mother Batseyes is half blind—blinder than she chooses to own—so I knew I could manage her. Oh, how my heart *did* beat! I am almost fainting. There, help me up.

[*Mounts the pony.*]

Wilhelm. I did not know I ever could feel so happy.

Elise. Now, mind, if anyone speaks to us, let *me* talk. I can copy their country accent exactly. You will spoil everything if you open your mouth.

Wilhelm. But may I not talk to you?

Elise. In moderation—if you have anything worth saying.

Wilhelm. I have got you a place as *fille de chambre* at the Countess Ida Von Mühlendorf's. She is a countrywoman of mine, now on a visit to the Dauphiness. When she returns to Germany you will be able to go in her train, and I shall soon follow. I have said you can do needlework. I suppose it is true?

Elise. Why, *there* they do nothing else [*pointing to the convent*]. I have had to make a complete trousseau for St. Ursula—stockings and all—this very winter. Those saints are much easier fitted, though, than live people! If they did not care for finery when

they were alive, they take all the more kindly to it now. And I shall see you sometimes ?

Wilhelm. That is just the point. I am in and out there every day.

Elise. O Wilhelm! the delight of liberty, after being shut up within those four hateful walls ! And, speaking of that, tell me, how is M. de la Vigne ?

Wilhelm. Do you not know ? Have you not heard ?

Elise. What, what ? What have they done to him ? What are they going to do to him ?

Wilhelm. Even their cruelty can do nothing more. He died in prison three weeks ago.

Elise. Alone !

Wilhelm. He did not know it. Hard fare and hard usage, all he had suffered in mind and body alike—— ! But he was happy, fancied himself among his friends, so the gaoler told me. He talked of you and of me and of others. Do not cry so, Elise, he was quite happy. He was too good not to be happy.

Elise. But never to see him again ! Oh, you don't know how often I had fancied the way you and I should go to him and surprise him. And how he would smile and look, and that little way he had of putting his hand on your shoulder when he was pleased ! I used to go over and over it again in my thoughts. Part of the happiness of marrying you was thinking it would make me a sort of daughter to him. You don't mind my saying so, do you ?

Wilhelm. It is what we both felt. But he was too good for this world. And if you had seen him as I have——

[*Music.*

Elise. There is the organ ! We have no time to lose. This way, Wilhelm, the little narrow road between the houses, and then over the bridge.

Wilhelm. We will travel all day and all night. At

Ouchy I have a friend who will shelter us. O Elise ! what a moment this is !

Elise. I feel as if I were dreaming still.

Wilhelm. Come, Bruno, old fellow, you have far to go to-day, but you would not grudge it if you only knew all.

Elise. Farewell, St. Ursula. How glad you must be to be rid of one of your large family of daughters. O Wilhelm ! Wilhelm ! I am so unhappy and so happy, I hardly know what I am saying. One laughs one moment and cries the next ; but I have not had the free air round me these eighteen months, and it intoxicates me.

Wilhelm. There, you will be more comfortable so. Wrap your cloak about you, and let us go silently through the town. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*The Boudoir of Madame de Pompadour.*

LADY-IN-WAITING *arranging breakfast.*

Lady-in-waiting. Past eleven o'clock, and still the Marchioness is not stirring. Everything goes from bad to worse ; that cough and fever are devouring her. With all her spirit she cannot last long—such nights as she has ! Ah, and what a prospect it is for me, to be turned adrift on the world—the world, too, which hates everything belonging to her. Surely there was a noise. [*Listens.*] No, I must have been mistaken. Well, with all her faults she has been a kind mistress to me. But we shall all have to look out for ourselves, for any one can see she is breaking fast. Mercy on us ! what is that ? [*Rushes to inner door.*

Enter Madame DE POMPADOUR in a robe de chambre, hurriedly.

Madame de P. Justine, Justine ! in Heaven's name !

Ah, 'tis you !

Here, let me feel you, let me touch your arm.

Ah ! now I wake and am once more myself.

The horror of the ghastly night swims past me ;

I breathe again, again I see the light,

My old familiar world comes back.

L. W.

Dear lady,

You start, you tremble, let me hold your hand.

See, that is better—taste [*offers her wine*].

Madame de P.

Away, away !

I cannot touch it. O Justine ! the horror

Of these last hours clings to me still, as flame

Clings round yon burning brand, and like a fiend

Laughs at the wasted shape it will not leave

Till all be choked in ashes. I have died,

I have been dead, last night. Within the vault

I lay, a conscious yet a helpless corpse ;

I heard, I know not how, a thousand cries

Pierce my sepulchral loneliness. 'Twas dark,

And yet I saw the faces of a crowd,

A haggard, hideous, swarming multitude,

Each face a diverse shape of hatred, scorn,

Brutish revenge and cruel lust of pain.

They pointed sneering fingers, spat my name

Forth as 'twere foulness from their bestial teeth.

I cannot—no, I cannot, though it rings

Still in my haunted memory—speak aloud

The names, the words they called me, nor the cries

And laughs of scoffing and triumphant joy

With which they hailed my funeral. As I lay

Dead, yet God knows alive, a speechless form,
Dry-lipped and impotent of tongue and hand,
I heard one cry, 'Ho! seize her, tear her limbs,
Fling her to dogs, like Jezebel!' And one
Came close and peered at me with greedy eyes—
Cursed me aloud. He touched me, and I woke.
You heard me cry?

L. W. Ay, madam. But enough;
Dreams are but dreams! Forget them; here are flowers.
See here the robe you chose yourself to wear
At the next banquet; down the white brocade
Meander wreaths of clematis and rose,
Surpassing Nature's self.

Madame de P. No more, no more!
Amid the flowers those faces come and go;
And when I hide my eyes—O heavens!
[*A knocking at the door is heard.*

Justine,
Tell no one. Silence, as you love my favour.
I will not have them say when I am gone,
That she who queened it once o'er France was
frighted
At her own silly shadows of the brain:
I die as I have lived.

*Enter WILHELM STRAUSS bearing a clay model
under a cloth.*

Wilhelm. Your pardon, lady,
If on your morning leisure I intrude.

Madame de P. 'Tis past midday. Your business,
sir, at once.

Our clocks have hands and voices—we, no need
Of you to play the sundial, though in shade.

Wilhelm. This model, lady, I was bid to bring,

I by your favour will unveil. See here
His Majesty enwreathed with laurel crown,
Who rides to victory——

L. W. [makes a sign to Wilhelm]. Ah, I know, the
statue

Destined for Paris, for the Place Louis Quinze.

*[During this speech Madame de P. gradually
recovers herself.]*

See, madam, see how nobly he looks forth
With lofty head, all dignity, all grace !
Beneficence is written on that brow,
Truth on those lips, and every inch a king
Benign and godlike, with paternal care
He gazes on the crowds who hand him down
Even to their children's children, the Beloved.
—Those four—those figures that adorn the base,
Have they no names ?

Wilhelm [stiffly]. Ay, Fortitude and Peace,
Justice and Prudence.

Madame de P. [sharply]. And why not ?

L. W. Be sure,

Madam, he thinks, and 'tis my judgment too,
Not Justice, Prudence, Fortitude alone,
Nor Peace herself suffices—no, nor yet
Were twice as many virtues sculptured there,
Humility and Truth, Benevolence,
Vast Magnanimity, the open hand
Of Generosity, the upturned gaze
Of Piety, th' unruffled brow of Faith,
The spotless robe of Purity—all these
But impotent would prove, inadequate
To shadow faintly to the France to be
What Louis is. *[To Wilhelm.]* Say, am I right ?

Wilhelm. In truth,

Madam, were all the virtues congregate
Joined in one beauteous chorus hand in hand,
'Tis little they could teach the coming world
Of what *he* is! ¹—But of that coming world
How little do we know!

Madame de P. What need of that?
The deluge after me! Meanwhile 'tis ours
To plant and build, to feast and to rejoice,
To suck the sweetness and the strength of Now,
And while our life be left us, live indeed.
The coming world's a world beyond the moon,
The haunt of dreamers and the bourne of fools,
Of embryo shapes for whom no natal day
Perhaps shall ever dawn, forebodings dim
Of shadowy morrows! But To-day, To-day,
This real world of touch and sight is here,
I grasp it now.

[*Puts out her hand to take hold of clay model; in
so doing she knocks it down and shatters it.*

Madame de P. O heavens! [*Faints.*

L. W. Make haste, begone!

I have work enough before me. Claire! Pauline!
Haste, haste, our lady faints. [*To Wilhelm.*

Here, give your aid
To lift her to her couch. How ghastly white,
How still, how corpselike! but she breathes. Pauline!
Claire!

[*Exeunt Lady-in-waiting and Madame de P.*

Wilhelm. So lie ye there, a parable too true,
Ye crumbling fragments of unreal state;
Hypocrisy in act, thou hollow toy!

¹ This statue gave occasion to the epigram;
Grotesque monument, infâme piédestal,
Les Vertus sont à pied, le Vice est à cheval!

—One touch can pulverise and lay thee low
Where every foot may trample on that head
Empty of noble thoughts, of wisdom void,
And crush and stamp the heartless, loveless breast
To nothingness and dust. Not so, not so,
Will *he* thus fall innocuous! Nay, by Heaven!
But in an earthquake like the crash of doom,
Of wide-spread, wide-resounding ruin, find
Thy yawning pit, Destruction, which even now
Heaves, with scarce smothered thunder, for his fall!
[*Exit.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Camp at Compiègne.*

Tents in the background. Soldiers seated on the grass.

1st Soldier. Well, if this be playing at war, I'd as lief be at it in earnest. Yesterday I was soaked, to-day I am broiled. One only needs to be spitted, and there would be an end.

2nd Soldier. True enough, Martin, for thee and me, but I doubt if our captain would say the same. Look in his tent; it might be a drawing-room, cushions here, mirrors there, and no want of pretty faces to look in them either. I had a brother at Minden. I can tell thee it was a pretty different business there. I should like to have seen the figure some of our fine gentlemen would have cut there. Their own sweet-hearts would not have known them.

1st Soldier. Fill my cup, Paul, there's a good fellow. Thy good health! [*They touch glasses.*]

2nd Soldier. Ah, this is better than those sour

Rhine wines, with names that stick in one's throat.
Another glass, man, to the health of thy pretty Babette.

1st Soldier. What dost thou mean by that?

2nd Soldier. Is no one to call her pretty, old boy,
but thyself? One must have eyes in one's head.

3rd Soldier. If you have eyes in your head, see
who comes here.

[*Military music and firing. Enter the DAUPHIN
in full uniform, accompanied by his wife.
Troops march past. A general cry of
'Long life to the Dauphin! long life to the
Dauphiness!'*]

Dauphin. My good fellows, you have made me so
proud of you, that I have brought my wife to see you.

2nd Soldier. Sir, we would die for you and your
good lady any day.

1st Soldier [aside]. She's not bad-looking; but if
Babette had a red habit and hat and feather like that,
she'd beat her all to nothing.

3rd Soldier. Hold thy peace, fool! Babette would
never have a way with her like that. Listen to what
she says.

M. J. My friends, this has been one of the happiest
days of my life—to see my dear husband like him-
self, surrounded by brave men, ready to go where duty
calls them, and to know something of the pride which
every soldier's wife must feel. Ah, believe me, there is
nothing in the world I am so proud of as to be called
a soldier's wife, and to know there are men like you,
and that our hearts are beating together.

2nd Soldier. Poor soul! she's a-crying. That's
always the way with them women.

Dauphin. Any of you who know what a good
woman is, will know what *she* has been to me, and
whether such are worth fighting for.

[*Tremendous cheering, and cries for the Duc de Bourgogne. The royal children enter, and form a group in front of their parents.*

Dauphin. There, my friends, is your future king. Be as loyal to him as you have been to me. I ask nothing more of you.

[*Cries of 'Long live the Dauphin! Long live the children of France!'*

1st Soldier [*saluting*]. I take the liberty, your honour, to ask your honour's leave to sing a little song as we have got ready for this happy meeting. It's what we all feels, sir, every one of us, only the words isn't much to boast of.

Dauphin. By all means, my friend, we shall all enjoy hearing it very much.

1st Soldier [*to others*]. Then we'll strike up, Paul, at once.

SONG OF SOLDIERS.¹

I said to myself, just a fortnight ago,
'Old Jack, wilt thou stay in the service or no?'
For to tell you the truth, though perhaps 'tis unkind,
There were one or two matters not quite to my mind.
The day it was long and the commons were short,
And drilling and goosestep seemed very poor sport;
First blinded with dust and then wet to the bone,
I said to myself, 'You'd best let it alone.'
But now, dry or wet, sir, 'tis nothing to Jack!
And the leave that I asked for, I give it you back;
I've seen our good Louis, his children and wife,
And for such honest people I'll lay down my life.

[*Cheering and music. Exeunt soldiers saluted by Dauphin.*

Enter the Abbé DESMOULINS from opposite side.

Dauphin. An unexpected sight, M. l'Abbé.

¹ See note at end.

Abbé D. Sir, I have serious news for you. [*Exeunt children at a sign from M. J.*] Madame de Pompadour is no more.

M. J. Heaven have mercy on her unhappy soul !

Dauphin. She is gone, then, at last ?

Abbé D. Yes, sir, as peacefully as a child.

M. J. God only knows the heart. He may have touched even hers, in those days and hours of suffering languor.

Dauphin. Has the King heard the news—and how ?

Abbé D. His Majesty received the news without being overcome. He exercised that self-control so habitual to kings.

M. J. And she—— ?

Abbé D. She confessed herself with great contrition, and arranged all her earthly affairs. She bequeaths, I hear, all her gems and her town house to his Majesty. I was with her all night, ministering to her to the best of my power. As I was taking my leave, she said, 'Stay a moment, monsieur, and we will depart together.' In another instant she was gone.

[*Pauses and looks towards the Dauphin, who is silent.*]

M. J. Poor woman ! and that is the end of all her splendour, all her—— [*D. makes her a sign.*] But we must not speak evil of the dead.

Abbé D. I will not detain your Royal Highness further.

M. J. Where is she to be buried ?

Abbé D. In the Capuchin Church—in a vault chosen by herself.

M. J. Good evening, Monsieur l'Abbé.

[*The Dauphin raises his hat, and the Abbé withdraws.*]

M. J. Well, this is news indeed !

Dauphin. Hush, hush for pity !
Our tongues should speak no evil of the dead.
Soon we may need that mercy for ourselves
That now we grudge to others. Mercy, heavens,
On her, on us, on all !

M. J. Dear heart, your words
Are noble as yourself—other than you
Perhaps might whisper of the load removed
From sinking shoulders and from erring feet,
The stumbling-stone that closed the path of right. . . . !

[*Dauphin makes a deprecatory gesture.*

Oh, let me speak this once, and pardon me,
My own best goodness, if a woman's heart
Can scarce absolve a woman, even though Death
Be her grim advocate where Flattery's mute,
Can scarce forget that she who lies thus low
Was once the canker of your flowery youth,
The shadow o'er your hopes, the daily fret
And loathed humiliation of your life,
A shame paraded hourly in your eyes,
Your scorn, and scorning you—a blot on France,
A poisonous seed of discord in your house,
Hindrance of all good works, and source of strife,
Cold looks, false whisperings, mildew jealousies,
That in suspicious chill and sunless damp
Creep o'er the heart unchecked.

[*He tries to interrupt her.*

Oh, stay me not.

This once I'll speak, and never more again.
We *will* forgive, we *must*, we *have* forgiven ;
But oh ! will pardon bring to you and me
Those long and dreary years of blighted youth,
That *should* have been so fair ? Will pardon bring

To France her ruined glories? Can the sun,
That hid his face in summer days when storms
Laid waste the fields, if he at length break forth
And gild the forests where October reigns,
Bring back the promise of th' unblighted ear,
Or ripen fruits that from the bough were dashed
By thick June hailstones, crude and hard and green?
Such were our hopes, so hopeless are they now!

Dauphin. Not in this world, not in this world, my
dearest, [*Pointing upwards.*

But yonder lies our realm, and at its gates
Sits Pardon, maiden with a mother's smile,
And beckons you and me. Oh, not in France,
Nor with those blighted hopes and barren days,
Our portion—they are gone away to silence,
The blest, the bitter discipline of youth.
And she is dead, God pity her! Yet lives
A deathless, fiendish spirit, many-faced,
That speaks in many voices, many hearts,
And self-emboldened fructifies and grows.
There is the monarch of our France to come :
It rises, we must fall. Oh, well I know
We bury not in this sad grave our sorrows,
Nor is the trial ended thus! How long,
How strange, how full of fierce, ironic pain,
And dreamlike contrasts, baffling mockeries,
Those Eyes once blindfold for our sakes discern!
Meanwhile let pardon and let patience work.
Bear with me yet, and love me yet a little,
It will not be for long.

M. J. Sweet love, sweet love,
It must be love indeed that makes me pardon
My loved one's bitterest enemy at his call!

[*Martial music. Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Fontainebleau.**A Sick-room.*

*Enter DU MUY and LACQUEY from opposite sides.
Du Muy in travelling dress.*

Du Muy. Am I in time? Is his Royal Highness still alive?

Lacquey. His Royal Highness is much the same, sir. Very little change since last night.

Du Muy. Any sleep?

Lacquey. No, sir, I believe not. 'His cough was very troublesome. His Royal Highness has been dozing a little, and will be moved in here, sir, when he wakes.

Du Muy. Then I will wait. Do not disturb anyone for me. The Dauphiness?

Lacquey. She is not allowed to see him, sir. They are almost as afraid for her as for him. Shall I bring you anything, sir, after your journey?

[Du Muy shakes his head. Exit Lacquey. Du Muy goes to the window and leans out.

Du Muy. Snow, cold white dazzling snow, where'er
I gaze;

The shivering garden statues all a-row
Stand petrified with fixed incongruous smiles;
The summer-house is choked with drifts; the lawn,
Where Beauty's foot danced lightly, shrouded deep
In that still winding-sheet; and here within
The painted Cupids spread their wings in vain
To reach a sunnier land. O friend! my friend,
What has thy whole life been but winter mocked
With unaccomplished promises of spring?

Cold as this thin-walled summer palace, bright
With gaudy semblance and unreal show !

[*Takes out a letter and reads.*]

'Du Muy, the truest friend we have ever had, you will come now to my husband, will you not, or you may never see him alive again ? He has been failing all the autumn ; never well since that time at Compiègne when he over-exposed himself. At one time we hoped ; but now we dare not hope for any earthly succour. He asks for you perpetually. You will come, will you not ? His broken-hearted wife,

'MARIA JOSEPH.'

I have travelled here post-haste with swiftest speed,
But my long weary journey hither seems
A trifle to the bitter moments spent
Already in these walls. O friend ! my friend,
What will my whole life be ? One winter long
Without thee ! Here, methinks, he sat, and here
His book of hours lies open [*kisses it*] as he knelt
Before the crucifix. How strangely hangs
This form of Love and Sorrow on the wall
Bedaubed with naked graces, dancing nymphs
In roses garlanded ! Hush ! 'twas his voice !
I hear a movement. O good heavens ! to die
Were easy after this !

[*Door opens, and the Dauphin is wheeled in by two servants, in an easy chair. Du Muy stands on one side. As he catches sight of the Dauphin he is overcome, and hurries out of sight. The servants place themselves behind the chair.*]

Dauphin. Du Muy ?

Du Muy [*comes forward*]. I am here, sir.

Dauphin. Give me thy hand. Thou'rt not afraid,
Du Muy,
To see thy friend once more?

Du Muy. It is not fear,
But—O my lord ! I am a child at speaking—
Thank Heaven, that grants me once again to touch
The dearest, noblest hand to me on earth. [*Kisses it.*
I have travelled day and night, my lord, to see you.

Dauphin. Du Muy, we sick men have a brilliant
lot,¹

And pity 'tis so brief. Mankind waits on us ;
The busy leave their toil, the gay their mirth,
All to attend our pleasure ; every word,
Each look of ours is held significant ;
The World becomes our flatterer, knowing well
We soon must leave her. Well I know her worth,
And gladly would anticipate the hour
That bids to all her vanities and her
A joyful long farewell. But thou, dear friend,
True in the sunshine; faithful still in gloom !
Oh, be thou near me now, Du Muy, nor leave me
In that last agony ! Methought last night
'Twas on me ; but it passed. I could not die
Without thy face beside me, and thine hand—
So small, so childlike when I touched it first
With little childish fingers of my own,
Now in beneficence of manhood strong,
While nought but helpless impotence is mine—
Oh, let me hold it still ! a brother's hand,
Down the dark valley of the shades of death
Still felt, still warm within my stone-cold grasp !

¹ 'Voyez donc,' répondit-il, 'les égards qu'on a pour les pauvres mourants ! Leur moment est bien brillant, c'est dommage qu'il ne soit pas plus long.'—DE BROGLIE.

Du Muy. Nay! like an angel's grasp to lead me upward.

Dauphin. Why should you look so sad? Does death affright you?

Du Muy. No; but, my lord, to think upon the pain,

The long sharp pain for you!

Dauphin. 'Tis sent from heaven,
And leads to heaven. [*To servant.*] Latour!

Servant. My lord!

Dauphin. I pray thee,
Go to thy mistress' chamber. Learn for me
How she has slept, how wakened—has she wept?
Bid her take courage for my sake, for all,
And say our friend is here. [*Exit servant.*]

Du Muy. A dreary spot,
This, for your Highness. [*Gazes out of window.*]

Dauphin. Nought is dreary now.
My life, Du Muy, has been a double life
Of late; two hovering, haunting spirit-forms,
For ever at my side! The one, arrayed
In seeming gorgeous garments, evermore
Has prophesied of kingship, earthly power,
Great destinies, great strifes; his voice at night
Has shown me France, my realm, myself a king,
Has whispered, Thus and thus 'twill be for thee
To plan and to accomplish, this of good
To foster, this of evil to reform,
This crying sin to check; and still I hearkened,
I longed to do, but ever in the doing
Methought the power of ill, gigantic grown,
Towered o'er me like a monster, and I fell
Crushed by the mountainous mass; yet day and night
'Thou must, thou must,' kept ringing in mine ear.

‘ Must fight, even single-handed, till the doom
O’erpower thee, sword in hand.’ The other shape
Came softer, slower, seldomer at first,
But when it came methought a tender veil
Dropped o’er the world, its glories and its ill ;
Despair departed, and a gentle voice
Said, ‘ I am Death, I loose thee from the load
No human shoulders e’er could lift ; I bid thee
Renounce the barren glories of thy crown,
And follow me to peace.’ I cried to Heaven,
‘ Thou knowest it is not cowardice nor sloth
That makes me hail Death’s gentle summons hence ;
I have tried, have prayed, have striven——’

Du Muy. With what zeal,
What still insistent earnestness of will,
My lord, none better know than I.

Dauphin [*smiles*]. Thou know’st—
Heaven knows ! Methinks I have spent my strength
for nought !

What could I do ? As one whose hands are bound
To a stake in his own garden, forced to stand
And watch the ruffian soldiery despoil
His flowers and fruits, and trample down his crops
Still immature, his little hoard of seed
Consume or waste, slaughter his live stock, steal
The roosting fowl, bemire the household stream,
Break down the fences—all for mere wild malice,
A diabolical and senseless joy
In working ill—he knowing all the while,
Some day his liberty restored—fair gift
Forsooth of liberty when hope is dead !—
The dreary task before him lies to till
His ruined garden, and bring back, alas !
What ne’er he can bring back—the prosperous days,

His long-abandoned youth, the toil of years
In vain stored up and garnered. . . . Oh, if then
Some soldier's knife be flashed before his eyes,
He welcomes his deliverance, lifts his throat
Bare to the blue bright weapon, and at once
Is freed from bondage, famine and despair.

Enter PHYSICIAN.

See, here comes one who fain would draw more tight
The knots about the weary captive's arms,
And firmer drive the stake! Good morrow, sir.

Physician. How fares your Highness now? how
passed the night?

Your royal hand one moment!

Dauphin. Hark ye, friend,
I am sick of remedies; I would be left
To die in peace as any peasant dies
When God and Nature call his soul away.
Henceforth no words of medicative art
I'll hear, prescribing this, forbidding that.
Leave me in peace.

Physician. But, sir, the King's command——

Dauphin. Doctor, there are no kings where I am
going.

[*Folds his mantle round him and closes his eyes.*]

Du Muy [*to physician*]. 'Tis useless, sir; though for
your sake it grieves me.

I know that face, those tight-drawn lips, of old.
'Tis vain to stay anticipating change
Of mood that never changes.

Physician. I obey.

But tell me, sir, the tapestry curtain hung
O'er yonder doorway's arch—the hero's name?
He with the crimson mantle and the helm?

Du Muy. What, Alexander?

Physician. Beshrew my memory!

Well, sir, suppose—'tis but suppose, you know—
This Alexander, whom you call the Great,
Lay sick abed and coughed—suppose his hand
Burnt feverish—and in fact suppose his case
Much like his Royal Highness' here . . . I'd give
him

This little phial——

Dauphin [rousing]. Take yourself away,
You and your phials, sir!

Physician. Ah, my lord Dauphin,
I only spoke of Alexander here,
See, in that tapestry curtain! I supposed,
If he had restless nights and qualms by day,
Why—I have known these drops——

[*Produces bottle from pocket. Dauphin shows
signs of irritation.*]

Du Muy. Hush! put them up,
Put by your medicines, doctor. I myself
Will mediate 'twixt his Majesty and you.
You have done your best, and best oft turns to worst
Unwillingly accepted or refused. [*Exit Physician.*]

Dauphin [raising his head]. What! is he gone, Du
Muy? Thank heavenly grace
That lets me die away in peace, untroubled.
Sit by me here, and hold my hand awhile.
Think we are boys together! So I'll dream
Of summer days, when sitting in one boat
You rowed, and in delicious reverie
I dipped my fingers in the waves and heard
The gurgling music streaming from the keel.
—Is it the sharpness of sick ears that brings me
Strange noises, as of waggons, from below?

Du Muy. 'Tis strange indeed, my lord, but in the court,
Heaped up with movables, a groaning wain,
Four-horsed, even now beneath the archway rolls.

Dauphin. 'Tis so ! I thought so ! I have stayed too long,
'Tis time I went, a hindrance and a burden
To men more busy-useful than myself.
'Tis tedious for the Court—for very shame
I ask their pardon ! 'Tis no fault of mine,
And yet I blush that this dull fellow's breath
Should linger faint and useless in his breast
Hour after hour, to weary Patience out
And Courtesy's self set yawning !

Du Muy. 'Tis the King !

Enter KING, followed by the Abbé DESMOULINS.

Dauphin. My father ! Speak to him, Du Muy ;
methinks
Even at this moment o'er my soul there glides
A dumb strange weakness. Speak to him for me.
I am fainting—give me air !

King. My son, my son !

Du Muy. His Highness bids me, sire,
Tell you he dies in love and gratitude
To you and all men ; nought can make him grieve
Save to have been so little service to you.
He leaves his infants to your royal care.

King. One look, one look, my son ! Touch but my
hand
To say you pardon me. [*Dauphin takes his hand.*
O speak to me !
[*Dauphin makes an effort to speak.*

His lips are moving—but the words—the words
Die ere they reach my hearing. O my son !
But say that word, forgive !

[*Dauphin makes an effort to whisper. Du Muy bends over him.*

Du Muy. He prays your Majesty
Be tender to her Highness while she lives.

King. No other message ?

Du Muy. None. He lies as calm
As one in heaven already.

The Abbé DESMOULINS comes forward.

Abbé D. My lord, I am sent
To warn you of your swift approaching end.
Oh, make an offering of your life to Him
Who gave His life for you.

Dauphin [rousing himself]. Ah, could you know
How little costs me such a sacrifice !

Closer, Du Muy ! [*Draws him to his side.*

Abbé D. Proficiscere anima Christiana de hoc mundo.

[*Dauphin repeats the words after him and expires,*
Curtain falls.

EPILOGUE

*The DAUPHINESS in a widow's dress. To her enter
Countess IDA, with flowers.*

M. J. Pure flowers of spring, I greet ye once again.
Long patient snowdrops, at the wind's rebuke
Trembling, but strong in constancy ; and you,
The mourner's flowers, sweet violets, dark as grief,
Yet sweeter, tenderer than all joy !

Dear friend,
Your flowers and you are welcome ; you yourself
Have sunshine in your face !

Countess Ida. I would that you,
Dear lady, in this first sweet day of spring,
Had felt the benediction of the sun,
And trod the woodland paths, where wakening Earth
Bride-like puts on her ornaments, and makes
Each coy delay a charm !

M. J. No more, no more
Tell me of earthly bridals ; never more,
Ida—I feel it *here*—will foot of mine
Touch the soft greensward, or the summer breeze
Waft kisses to my cheek. Dost thou remember
That summer's even at the Königstein,
And all the girlish fears, misgivings, doubts,
I poured into thine ear—I dreaded then
The stately cold espousals, where no heart,

No word of tenderness, no warmth of love,
Were promised—dost remember it?

Countess Ida.

Dear lady,

In memory 'tis a thing of yesterday.
I see it all, and you, a beauteous girl,
Fair as a new-built vessel, bright, unstained
By ocean's warfare, when, the summons given,
She slides to seaward, garlands on her stern,
Fragrant with wine, and music on the breeze
That on her sunlit sails impatiently
Clamours and chafes and hurries to be gone.
And now, oh, now, that selfsame ship are you,
Slow travelling back, with all the rosy light
Of evening on your gallant sails, though torn,
More glorious far, while overhead there floats
The flag of victory ; and if some tears
Fall, they are lost in triumph, and that peace
Whose olive crowns the warrior's glad return.

M. J. Speak not to me of triumph. Hadst thou
known,

As I have known, the glory of that life,
Framed for all manliness, by nature dowered
With kingly faculties, in whose high soul
No meanness could find footing, not one thought,
No unbecoming word, no base desire
Could dwell for one short moment of one day,
And didst thou know, as few but I have known,
His hopes how frustrate, each renewed attempt
Blighted, abortive, balked, no space allowed
To move or turn in freedom, scarce to breathe .
As one deep-chested, whose full resonant voice
Might wake the woodland echoes from afar,
Is bid to whisper, and to mutter low
Within a sick man's chamber, or as one

Who longs to swing his mighty arm abroad,
Is tied and wound about with cords—scarce finds
Room to uplift one finger, so was he
His whole long life ! Ingloriously to live,
To fast from Fame, to keep a hero's heart
When those who might have done th' heroic deed
Snapped in men's hands, like Egypt's broken rush,
And he who would have done, who longed to do,
Entangled, baffled, crushed, had but the will
And not the power to do !

Countess Ida. Yet this is glory,
For where is glory seated ? In the heart,
Not in the fortunate luck-favoured hand
That stretches oft for prizes not its own.

M. J. Ah, you speak well ; the hero is the man,
The noble will is greatness, and the deed
Is but the shadow of the noble will,
That comes and goes with sunshine or with gloom.
Oh, how I longed for one bright break in heaven,
For one short passing of the clouds, one gleam
To gild and glorify that dearest head,
To shadow in one momentary deed
That which he is, was always, and will be
When France and all her glories are forgot !
But oh, dear friend, there is a world on earth—
Few hearts, but faithful—where his power is felt,
And he and such as he can never die ;
And there's a world—how vast a world !—on high,
Where each good purpose, each sublime desire,
Crowned haply with achievement or uncrowned,
A throneless monarch all its days, and yet
Royal at heart, each self-subjecting aim,
Each glorious silence, each restraint imposed.
On hand or eye, on gesture or on tongue,

Unknown to man, or misconceived, shall find
 Its kindred welcome and condign applause,
 Taintless, unstinted, evermore enjoyed
 Yet ne'er to be exhausted ; and to this
 I grudge him not. But oh ! to follow him,
 How can I dread the bridal couch of death ?
 Ida, farewell, you seek your home again,
 As I do mine.

Enter WILHELM and ELISE.

Countess Ida [to them]. Not now, not now. Her grace
 Is ill and weary—at some future time
 Perchance will see you.

M. J. Nay, but let them come.
 So deep a heart of happiness is mine,
 It fain would mirror on its surface-waves,
 Dark though they seem, the faces of the glad,
 The smiles of lovers, and the dimpling mirth
 When childhood laughs, and laughs and knows not
 why.

Welcome, oh, welcome, both of you ! Elise,
 Love Dresden for my sake no less than his ;
 And when you look upon my river dear,
 And 'mid the Bast-Ei's frowning rocks and firs
 Wander by moonlight with your love, oh, then
 Whisper to my dear trees and giant crags,
 And thank them for my sake !

Enter KING, Duc DE BOURGOGNE and DU MUY.

King. Tell her his Majesty and the Dauphin are
 here.

[*Usher announces his Majesty and M. le Dauphin.*

M. J. [bursts into tears]. His name ! God help
 me bear it—and so soon !

Countess Ida. Heartless as ever! [*Aside.*]

[*Dauphiness throws herself at the King's feet.*

King.

Madam, dry your tears.

M. J. Sire, at your feet I throw myself, my children.
Be good to me for *his* sake who is gone.

[*King raises her up.*

King. Madam, be comforted; your loss is ours.

All France obsequious in his funeral pomp
Walks clad in sable, silver tears and plumes
Bedeck the costly hearse and velvet pall,
The livery of true grief, and I myself
Mourn as you see, not outwardly alone,

[*Indicates his mourning dress.*

But in my heart's profoundest depth lament
Him whose strong hand could curb the rising power
Of our rebellious parliaments, each day
Growing more heady and more mutinous
Against our sacred self. Now he is gone,
Where shall we find the bulwark of defence
'Twixt heaven-born kingship and rebellious will?

De Muy. [*Bringing Duc de Bourgogne forward.*
Madam, in this young heart, so grant it Heaven!

D. de Bourgogne [*places himself by his mother's side*].
Mother, I cannot speak, but deeds one day
Shall be my words—far more than tongue can say.

[*Exeunt.*

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Original of soldiers' song at p. 268 :

Ma foi, v'là qu'est arrangé.
Grand merci, not' capitaine ;
Reprenez votre congé.
Le métier n'a plus rien qui nous gêne.
J'ai vu Louis et ses enfants ;
Je veux mourir pour ces honnêtes gens.

P. 278.

The incident of the physician's visit is told almost literally as it happened ; as is the story of Louis XV. causing his grandson to be announced as Dauphin to his widowed mother.

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